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The Victims' Return

By NOËLLE ROGER

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By NOËLLE ROGER

WITH AN HISTORICAL NOTE BY
EUGÈNE PITTARD

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TO THOSE WHO GUIDED, HELPED, AND SUPPORTED THIS SCHEME FOR REPATRIATING INTERNED AND EVACUATED CIVILIANS;

TO THOSE WHO SHOWED THEM DEVOTION AND LOVE;

TO THAT ANONYMOUS HOST WHICH CAME TO WELCOME THEM, MINGLED ITS TEARS WITH THOSE OF THE VICTIMS, AND SO GAVE THEM THE GREATEST OF ALL CONSOLATIONS IN THEIR HOURS OF SADNESS;

I Dedicate this Book.

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THE VICTIMS' RETURN

THE PROCESSION OF VICTIMS AT SCHAFFHAUSEN

THE months October, 1914, to February, 1915, will be remembered in the annals of Schaffhausen—a small, smiling town on the banks of the river which seemed to turn its thoughts and sympathy to Germany. A trustful little town, which had a rude awakening from its dreams and illusions. When, day after day, night after night, it watched the procession of interned and evacuated French folk, it suddenly came into terrible contact with the horror of this war.

At first these people were interned civilians—families caught unawares in Germany by the declaration of war and taken off into concentration camps. There were tourists among them, pilgrims from Alsace-Lorraine, and young people completing their education or spending their holidays in University towns beyond the Rhine. Soon these were followed by inhabitants of the invaded districts of France, who had been im-

prisoned in Germany and were now being repatriated—old folk, women, children, invalids, helpless people. (Men between sixteen and sixty years of age were detained "back there.") An exodus, this, of a whole population, shaken and flung together by the chances of disaster; a rabble of unfortunates of widely different stations, torn from their homes—often without being able to take a thing with them, and possessing only the poor clothing they wore. There were mayors, municipal councillors, priests—seized as hostages—families which had lost half their members; children without parents; dazed old men; poor grannies who had never been outside their village; middle-class folk and workpeople; pedlars and peasants; wives of superior officers; magistrates, and doctors; Sisters of Mercy and prostitutes; poor-law children, half-witted creatures; paralytics carried on stretchers; civilians who had been wounded. . . .

Amid this extraordinary disorder one saw crowds of human beings moving like sheep, going they knew not whither, swept along together by a storm of unprecedented violence which, day after day, flung up fresh waves of misery, all the same, but all different—poor, ill-starred, stunned, docile creatures who bowed to their destiny without comprehension or protest.

Schaffhausen witnessed their passing.

M. Henri Moser, a Federal Commissioner, together with M. Spahn, organized a reception committee, though he had but a small amount of public money at command—expenses have been heavy in Switzerland since war broke out. As he felt in honour bound to give the public an unforgettable object-lesson, as it were, he allowed all comers access to the station platforms. When the train of refugees arrived, closed and sinister, and when the doors at last were opened and slowly disgorged this crowd of wan-cheeked, crushed unfortunates—the good people of Schaffhausen were horror-struck, believing that they saw the chill spectre of all the tragedies whereof these travellers brought with them the terrible remembrance.

Then occurred a spontaneous, irresistible movement. Clothes and food flowed in: the very poorest brought their offerings. Workmen, townspeople, peasants—all took part. M. Moser wished them to enjoy the pleasure of making their offerings in person. Gifts were not registered: givers refused to tell their names. Schoolchildren clubbed their lunches and distributed them. The least wealthy villages in the canton joined in the common good work. Their inhabitants, one after another, brought clothes, sacks of potatoes, fruit. From all the surrounding country carts arrived laden with provisions; col-

lections were made in town-halls and churches; shopkeepers closed their shops of an afternoon to be able to help receive the refugees. From the young girl who in the street took off her furs and threw them round the shoulders of a refugee—saying to M. Moser, " I give them because of all things I love them the best: I got them at Christmas "—to the most destitute of the working folk, all took a share in this united effort of a populace striving to bring consolation and comfort to others.

Ever since that time Schaffhausen has been doubly dear to us.

MM. Moser and Spahn had formed a committee of a hundred and thirty-nine members, and begged them above all things to be gentle and kind, as he knew well that the most important thing was not the distribution of gifts, but tenderness and moral consolation. He was anxious to make our guests feel restored to family life.

The convoy arrived between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. When the transference of the baggage into the Swiss train had been completed, the refugees were divided into several sections and handed over to members of the committee, who took them away to be fed. Graciously were th ey led through the streets Young Schaffhausen took charge of the children

and lent an arm to the old folk, while the rest of the populace formed an escort. The travellers gazed round them at the paved roads, so clean and quiet; at the large-roofed houses; at the seemly, well-cared-for appearance of our little town, with its look of smiling good-humour, and kept saying—their own village in their thoughts—"How quiet it is here!"

As they passed, shop doors flew open. Good folk offered them some dainty, shook them by the hand. Women stood tiptoe on their door-steps. Handkerchiefs were waved. No! they were not strange streets, these streets which the exiles now saw for the first time. It seemed to them that they were returning to a place they loved in days gone by, where folks whom they knew welcomed them with open arms. People who for weeks and months had encountered the hostility of men and things seemed now to awake from a long nightmare, and at a bound to escape the misfortune in which they had been engulfed.

Each of the conductresses halted her squad before the inn allotted to it—one of those inns which still, in accordance with old custom, have a sign swinging over the door, which preserve a touch of domesticity, a dignified air, a flavour of affable hospitality.

They went inside. In the great bright hall, with its shining wainscoting, specklessly clean, a

table had been laid. All the guests were found places, served with coffee, gently encouraged to eat; and many were so moved by this first meal offered them in kindness that they could not restrain their tears. Young girls vied in rendering small necessary services, such as writing letters, sending telegrams, giving information. M. Moser had insisted that, above all things, the refugees should feel themselves at liberty. So, after the meal, they were taken into the prettiest old streets of the city. At every step came fresh tokens of this unobtrusive sympathy, conveyed by a gesture, a word, a stealthy gift.

If the weather were fine, they went to the falls of the Rhine. The travellers gazed at the lovely scenery in silence. They returned by train; and some of them, leaning on the doors, turned their eyes back, still gazing. They will carry away with them this precious view of Schaffhausen; they will store up this cheering recollection with those of their tragedy.

"This journey," wrote a girl on returning to Paris, "will remain stamped on my memory all my life, for it gave me the chance of seeing things which were unknown to me. I had heard people talk often enough of lovely Switzerland, but my imagination could not picture what my eyes have now actually admired. I am quite pleased to go

back to school to begin work again, and tell my mistress and schoolfellows of all the interesting things I have seen in Switzerland. I can still see Mont Blanc, and the falls of the Rhine, and all the Swiss Mountains." She signed herself "Your little repatriated friend, Madeleine."

One refugee woman wrote from Annemasse: "This journey will never be effaced from my thoughts." Another: "Nowhere in the world have I met people so lovable as those in Switzerland."

Ah! all those letters that have reached us! Elegant screeds; well-phrased notes; faultless formulæ expressing sincere feeling; poor, badly spelt, touching missives in which clumsy fingers have forced themselves to convey strong emotion. We cannot quote them here; but they show once again how right M. Moser was in making our people his chief helper, and giving them full scope for carrying out the humble, unsung, sweet work of help and consolation.

One after another the squads passed into the splendidly organized clothing depot. The refugees were made to pass in file before long tables laden with things all ticketed and sorted. Each woman could mention and select the things she needed most. There were outfits for children and layettes: linen, too, and clothes for the men.

The latter in many cases were very modest. "You mustn't give me so many things," said an old countryman who had lost his all, "or there won't be enough left for the others."

The pleasantest time in the day was the evening meal. Each detachment returned to its appointed inn, and repaired to the dining-hall with its now familiar table. The poor victims of misfortune were growing accustomed to this new atmosphere; to faces which had so quickly become dear to them. They felt at their ease, among friends, and many of them began to smile again. M. Moser spoke a few words of kindly welcome, telling them how delighted the people of Schaffhausen were to receive them. An old Frenchman rose to reply. Sometimes he was an old peasant, unready of speech, but who nevertheless was determined to express his thanks.

A choral society or some orchestra or other would drop in at the end of the meal to play Swiss airs and sing the "Marseillaise." This brought smiles to the refugees' faces, and often made them turn their heads away and cry.

When, at ten o'clock, they were put in the train for Geneva, they took away with them the impression of having been at a family gathering, a family subdued and serious, saddened by mourning, but recovering, by the love that its members

showed, courage to live. Leaning out of the carriage-doors, they tried to get a last glimpse of the town through the darkness. And they saw, crowded together on the iron bridge, groups of Schaffhausen folk who had come to bid them good-bye.

* * * * *

In the station itself a hospital had been arranged. A single convoy included fifty-six consumptives. The long procession of stretchers was a sad sight.

It was towards the end of October, 1914. The train had just come in, and several stretchers were already *en route* for the infirmary. From a carriage there emerged a poor fellow, terribly thin and wan, with sweat trickling in large drops down his face. He seemed to be dying. They took him away and laid him on one of the beds. A little later a nurse was greatly surprised to find the "dying" man busily engaged in bolting everything that was offered him. He had recovered from his exhaustion. He pointed to his cap, on which the notice "deaf-mute" was displayed, and expressed his thanks by signs. He had but one arm, and that was tuberculous. On the bed next to him they had laid an old consumptive, whom a nurse was persuading to drink a cup of cocoa. When this refreshment enabled him to speak, he said that, but for the

help given him, he would never have reached the end of his journey alive.

He came from Soissons, and asked news of his town. "Yonder they were told that Paris had fallen and that France was beaten. But nobody was going to believe *that*."

The nurse, fearing he would tire himself, advised him to sleep until the time came to leave. The old man replied:

"Who wants to sleep in such pleasant company?" The poor old fellow, doomed though he was, and handed about like a pitiful item of baggage, yet managed to find something agreeable to say!

Ah! the old folk whom this Schaffhausen infirmary has seen pass through it! Shrivelled countrywomen, who had managed to reserve their bonnets, a black kerchief crossed on their breasts, dragging their clogs painfully along the ground, and carrying most carefully in the hand some nondescript object saved in the general scramble and guarded all the journey through. One had her warming-pan; another a pipkin full of melted butter. Some were still lively and talkative—they could not read; they had never been outside their villages; they never would have believed that the world contained so much room. They talked about all kinds of old-fashioned customs, referred to the leech or the bonesetter,

named the doctor "the veterinary" or even "the priest," and described marvellous remedies in which they placed implicit confidence. They had a word to say, too, about the happenings which had upset the tenor of their lives—quite unexpected opinions. "War! . . . Who could have believed it to be so awful?"—"Anyway, last time the Prussians did us no harm."—"Last time can't be compared with this"—and so on.

Some had a distracted look: the catastrophe had unhinged their minds, plunging them into a childishness from which they will never emerge.

One bent, broken-down peasant had brought away nothing but the key of his ruined house—a massive and many-warded key, now his sole possession. He kept it in his hand, and, when he ate, laid it down beside him. This absolutely useless key was the one thing that still had any value for this tragical old fellow, whose eyes seemed ever to see his misfortune there before him.

Most of the refugees were silent, wrapped in the sadness of resignation. They no longer knew where they were. For goodness knows how long they had been moved hither and thither, penned like cattle! They had but a confused recollection of an unaccountable disaster which had burst over them, tearing them adrift from everything they had loved for three-quarters of a century or more—tearing them away from the

countless little things that made up their lives and kept them on their feet, alive and active. Now—they are but wrecks: they will never be their old selves again; nothing can make good the damage done them; they will never take root again.

They are led away, they are led back, docile as tiny children. They thank one politely. They seem lost in dreams, and have no clear notion of where reality begins. Once, hostile faces hemmed them in; now, by a righteous turn of the wheel of fortune, they find friendly faces smiling at them. If they can still manage to walk, one gives them an arm along the street. They see the weakest of their number carried by on stretchers. On they go, subdued, bent. Said one of them, turning towards me his shrivelled face, the flesh of which seemed dead already: "My wife remained at home. Do you think I shall find her again? One should never have left. . . ."

They had looked on at the pillaging and burning of their farm. They had seen their cattle, tended with so much care, gallop off—or perhaps they saw their cows and bullocks led away by the Germans. One of them, a horse-breeder, whose mares and foals had all been taken, had become crazy. Another, while in the train that was carrying him to Germany, kept saying at every

station: "I want to get out! It's time for me to go and feed my beasts."

Oh! these poor old peasants from the Ardennes, the Meuse and Lorraine, whose doings, repeated day after day so many, many times, become as it were a ritual. They sowed their wheat and tended their cattle. Slowly, slowly came prosperity. Grandchildren grew up around them. It was a modest form of human happiness, yet it sufficed. And in a few days all was scattered to the winds—wrecked. Then they understood things no longer.

In a village near Saint-Mihiel a grandmother was dandling a three-year-old granddaughter on her knees when a shell exploded, disembowelling the child and wounding the old woman in the hands. Aghast, she stared at the corpse, which she still clung to, while all its blood mingled with her own. On the morrow she had to start for Germany. They put her in the train with her daughter—the mother of the dead child—a poor thing who wept incessantly, and who, unaided, had tended the wounded hands, bandaging them as best she could. The grandmother was frozen stiff with horror, ever seeing the little bleeding body on her knees, but she shed not a tear.

At Metz the Germans made her leave the train, while her daughter was compelled to go on to Rastadt. There, at Rastadt, as a result of

many inquiries made by a German officer with some humanity in him, this poor woman heard of the death of her mother a few days later.

Of all these sufferings, obscure and heart-rending, no one will know. Surely we cannot be too pitiful! A repatriated woman told me: "I had with me my boy of eight. He died down there. I am returning all alone."

An old woman said: "I know well enough that we ought not to have stayed so close to the frontier. But what can you expect—we were born there?"

Facts became confused in their memories. The endless journey of to-day has already blended itself with the awful journey made through Germany when they were torn from their homes. The very names of countries have got jumbled up. Are they in Germany? or in Switzerland? or in France? They can't say. They only know that their "place"—their farm, the village steeple—exists no longer, and that they will not behold those well-known scenes again.

A deaf old woman, seeing people smiling and offering her their hands, shouted at the top of her voice—unaware that she was in Switzerland—"Long live Germany!" And for a long time all attempts to make her stop were useless.

Another said: "In this town 'Entrance' [Eingang] people have been very good to us."

All these old men and women whom we saw file past at Schaffhausen, Zurich, and Geneva—dragging themselves along leaning on the arm of our police, carried in motor-cars, borne on stretchers, helpless, with their legs hanging down, their staring faces—piteous lumps of humanity, from whom at times a cry was wrung by suffering, paralyzed old women, crippled old men, consumptives, asthmatics, some half blind, others deaf, others distraught, all alike and yet all different—a sorrowful stream which never ceases to flow! Ah! who could describe a wretchedness such as never was seen before?

We came across them again at Annemasse, huddled together in a corner of the waiting-room. "Where are you off to?"

"I don't know." Or perhaps they made no reply, merely shaking their heads sadly.

"But are you not going by this train?"

A shake of the head—"I don't know."

It is the indifference of despair. Fate casts them hither, throws them back thither. Poor old folk whom one takes by the arm, and hoists into the carriages—one kindly person pushing behind while another pulls in front—who sink exhausted on to a seat, whose dull silence seems to say: "How long are we to go on like this? How long?"

Ah! all these old people whom we have seen

go by! Their tears are slow to come; their silence is appalling. Had they complained, one could at least have tried to give them a little hope. But they never complained. Some uttered a few childish words, simple words of thanks, as if they could not accustom themselves to finding a little fleeting sweetness amid this never-ending catastrophe.

When we look at them stretched on the infirmary mattresses, or seated in a corner, with heads bowed down, shoulders bent, their grey locks in disorder, their limbs numbed, their knotted hands now quite soft, we cannot picture that once, some months ago, they were alert, active old women, fine, strong old fellows who guided the plough, and at the end of the field drew themselves up and smiled back at the newly turned furrow; and of an evening smoked their pipes before the farm door; and on Sunday walked in groups discussing village matters, while following with their eyes the lads who were beginning to take their places.

Villages of France with tuneful names, the mere sound of which conjures up severe old houses, old-time farms, steeples with pure lines, fields all around climbing the hills, a limited horizon all sweetness and grandeur, lines of trees which run along quiet streams wherein stooping women wash their linen, singing the while! Unknown villages

whose names leaped into fame or tragedy, when your churches rang the tocsin and answered one another across the fields! What one among you had forebodings of approaching fate? What are you to-day? Gutted houses, wrecked farms, calcined rubbish, shattered towers. Like your old, ruined peasants, you are given up to silence and despair. Oh! these bodies, half destroyed: bodies from which the over-tortured soul has fled! Their families are scattered; their children lost.

The villages—no doubt they will be rebuilt. In new bell-towers the bells will ring again. Young trees will shoot up beside the shattered trunks; beside old, unforgettable suffering happiness will come to life again, patiently, slowly.

But these old hearts—how many of them will remain unconsoled! How many of them will go down to the grave, how many will reach the journey's end, still mute and broken!

The infirmary at Schaffhausen has seen indescribable misery pass through it. Many of the children were ill with coughs and fever; others were worn out. It was piteous to see these poor creatures whom their mothers had not been able to tend in their flight. Many of the repatriated when they arrived were suffering from quinsy, a disease which was especially virulent in the Rastadt cells, and the nurses at Schaffhausen

caught it from their charges more or less seriously. Several of them were laid up with it for weeks; one young woman did not recover for eight months; and a girl, Marguerite Biedermann, died from it.

When I watch a group of girls helping the refugees to carry their baggage along the station platform, or leading the slow procession through the streets, I always see among them the shade of Marguerite Biedermann.

She was twenty-four years old. Young, enthusiastic, and modest, she was beginning to find life a little too easy for her, and dreamed of becoming an artist. She gave up painting for nursing; and, while her father made himself responsible for the heavy task of entertaining the refugees, and her mother busied herself with the clothing department, she devoted her energies to the sick who came in. Every day for four months she was at her post. Furthermore, she often accompanied convoys to Geneva, working all the night through and never ceasing to help and comfort the wretched, broken-hearted travellers. When she was stricken with the disease, the symptoms of which all who tended the refugees knew only too well, she kept on with her work regardless of her health, and struggled on to the end. At last she had to give in, and died after several weeks of suffering.

She died on the battlefield in the fulfilment of her duty, as surely as many a young unknown hero who dies in the defence of his country.

I cannot record here all the tragedies witnessed in this station infirmary, but I will recall just one.

One evening the Federal Commissioner at Schaffhausen was informed that there was in the infirmary a woman whom it was dangerous to allow to leave, since she was threatening to commit suicide. He went to see her at once, and found quite a young girl lying on one of the beds, shaken from head to foot by paroxysms of weeping—a poor distraught creature who had completely lost her self-control. She came from Alsace and could not speak French. He managed to calm her a little and to get from her some disjointed words which enabled him to piece her story together.

When but seventeen she had married the French accountant of a large industrial concern in Alsace. When the war broke out her husband, along with all the Frenchmen in the town, was summoned to the town-hall. Next day they left for Rastadt. All their wives and children watched them leave. There were heartrending partings. The men had to get into the train. The young accountant, distracted by this terrible scene—his wife had had to be torn from his arms—already showed signs of an over-excitement which his companions vainly tried to calm.

At a station in Germany where they were made to alight—though nobody knows exactly what happened—the man was seen struggling frantically with some German non-commissioned officers. A scuffle followed, and the prisoner got a thrust from a bayonet. They led him off, and next day his companions heard that he had been shot. His clothes, riddled by bullets, were sent back to his family!

Meanwhile the little widow, unaware of her misfortune, was sent to Germany and interned there. In the train which was bringing her back to her native land she had just learned the truth from one of her husband's companions. She knew nobody in France; yonder there was only her stepmother, who had opposed her marriage. She could see but one thing to look forward to—death.

All this the Commissioner gathered. He realized that the girl could be saved in one way only. He took her with him to his wife. The little widow became the pet of the house, and learned again how to smile.

At 10 p.m. everyone has been found a place in the carriages. The children are made to lie down, and we try to cheer up the old folk. Just before eleven the train pulls out amid cries of "Vive la France!" from Schaffhausen people leaning over

the bridge. Handkerchiefs are waved. Good-byes are exchanged by strangers who are strangers no longer; affectionate signals are waved through the shadows and received by the travellers.

The train rolls along through fields, now quite shrouded in darkness. As one passes through the carriages one stops and feels tears rise to the eyes at the sight of all these little sleeping tots. These north-country families are large—five, six, seven, ten children. They have arranged themselves as best they could. Little brothers and sisters are lying two-and-two on the seats, with hair intermingled. In some cases mothers have close together on their knees two fair heads, two round faces almost exactly alike, their quiet breath uniting in one. They nod at us, or smile as we pass: "Yes, they are sleeping nicely. I am all right, thank you!"

Then they resume their drowsy reveries, head leaning back against the wall, eyes shut, amid the little motionless bodies. Shadows make their faces look hollow, bring into relief the marks of sorrow and suffering. They are thinking of the father at the war, of whom they will at last get news. Ah! what news? They are thinking of the old folk who stayed behind in the invaded village—of the eldest son whom the Germans seized.

We go from one carriage to another, and every-

where we see the same picture—mothers thinking, old men sleeping, broods of tiny children whose happy expressions are, as it were, a smile amid all the distress around them.

Sometimes a lonely woman who cannot sleep feels encouraged by the silence in the carriage and begins suddenly to talk in a low voice. She tells us her story—a confused and tragic story, and always the same, yet always fresh, with its unexpected details and words which make you shudder. You hear of sufferings of which the world knows nothing, of living tragedies, tales of captivity or death, days of terror, visions of massacre. Human life was no longer taken account of—her neighbour lay in the street riddled by bullets—good peaceful folk, known to one all one's life, were put against a wall and shot. . . .

"The sky was heavy with smoke, black and red in places. . . .

"At three o'clock in the morning all the inhabitants were afoot, looking to their beasts, with all speed, to make a start. . . .

"We had stopped on a little mountain near a Red Cross station. The soldiers pointed out to us the French army approaching; we could see the cavalry disappearing over the horizon, spread out in a most marvellous way. But about eleven o'clock we saw the cavalry reappear; reinforce-

ments were coming up; we did not know what that meant. The Red Cross soldiers said nothing more. . . ."

A peasant tells us this story in a droning voice. She still has a look of terror on her rigid face.

"At half-past eleven a farmer came up to us, hat in hand. We thought he was mad. He told us that the Germans had driven him out of his house and were quite close. We could actually see them firing from the windows. We were greatly put about when we noticed a farm quite close to our house burst into flames. It was like a thunder-clap. Bullets passed over us, whistling overhead; one could see only red specks. It was a mad journey. All our eyes were wide open with terror."

But the village to which they fled was invaded almost immediately afterwards.

Another saw a woman delivered of a dead child in a wood, with the other children close round her.

"It was six in the evening. An officer came up and told us to be off. As for the poor woman, I don't know what became of her. There were a thousand of us in flight. . . ."

Another said: "My neighbour gave birth to a child in a field between the two armies."

"I saw my husband killed at a garden gate," said a young woman from Lorraine in a wretched mourning dress. "I escaped into a cellar with

my little wounded daughter. I had lost sight of my two little boys. Then, when day broke, I went to look for them: they had lain all night on their father's body."

These awful things are related as the most natural of occurrences, in a matter-of-fact manner that makes one shudder. I notice a still young woman sitting beside her eighteen-year-old daughter, not saying a word, her eyes wide open. Her face is thin, and hard with the fixed look that we know so well—the look by which, in the Savoy villages where they are quartered, we can tell at a glance which refugees have actually *seen* the war.

She, too, begins to talk monotonously and quickly, as if she were afraid of not having time to finish. In an endless stream fresh scenes recur to her mind and pour from her lips. Then she stops, and her daughter takes up the tale. The mother breaks in now and then to recall some overlooked detail. It is a weird and terrible duologue. Sometimes they smile. They suppress their voices so as not to wake the sleepers in the carriage, but, in spite of their smiles and calm tones, how one feels the horror that lives in them, and will never leave them!

They came from Combres, a Meuse village, not far from Saint-Mihiel. On September 7 it was invaded for the first time by Germans, who stayed

there six days and then had to withdraw. On the 27th the bombardment began. The inhabitants took refuge in their cellars. Presently they heard all the doors being struck violently by butt-ends of rifles. The Germans had come! The terror-stricken people had to look on while their houses were pillaged.

"At our house they found a bag full of cartridges which a French soldier had left there. That put them into a rage. A German threw the bag down and pounded it with his butt. A cartridge exploded, and the ball went through the ceiling. I had hidden myself with my son in a room right up in the roof; and when I heard the explosion I thought that they had shot my husband and daughter. The boy was taken ill; we did not dare open the door, fearing we should see. . . . At last my boy went out on to the stairs and cried: "Mamma! our Madeleine is there, and papa too; they are alive!"

A pause of some minutes, then:

"Next day all the inhabitants had to leave their houses, and were collected in the street. Machine-gun bullets whistled overhead. On this occasion the village was being bombarded by the French. We durst not speak, as the sentries had been ordered to make us keep silent.

"After an hour's waiting an officer came up to the crowd. Can't you imagine the silent dis-

may of all these women and children, their anxious looks ?

" The officer pointed to the high ground where the German batteries were and said: " Follow me !" The young girl is now telling the story, and her voice shakes a little. " There could be no doubt about it; we were off to the battle. Everybody began to groan with dismay; and then a shell burst and wounded a woman and a young man. We all took to our heels to shelter ourselves near the houses. But the officer angrily repeated the order to march. We embraced one another, wept, and resigned ourselves to die, as die we must. Some sentries followed behind; we marched in ranks, and arrived at the top of the Hauts de Meuse hill, where we had to sit in the blazing sun. The firing stopped for a moment, but soon began again harder than ever. The German guns replied. We were so near them that they seemed to be right among us. We huddled ourselves together . . ."

" Yes !" broke in the mother. " But *I* did not want our four heads to be touching, so that we should be killed all together. The children said to me: ' If you die, we want to die with you.' "

She pauses to hunt up a detail.

" When we reached the foot of the hill I saw, just behind us, the curé surrounded by three sentries. Shells were falling. I turned my head

slowly and saw the curé quickly make the sign of the cross as a shell passed. He was giving all his parishioners absolution."

Just imagine these defenceless peasants, these women and their little ones, exposed to such torture; these families lying flat on the ground; the children shrieking as they clung to their mother; fathers taking a part in *that*. . . . Some distance away German soldiers were digging holes—to shelter in, no doubt. But all kinds of imaginings filled those terrified minds. "They are digging our graves. They are going to shoot us. . . ."

The young girl goes on.

"At six o'clock in the evening we were told to get up, fall in, and follow the sentries again. We came to the church. The women were sent back to the houses to fetch food for the men, who had to stay inside the church. My mother and I first went into the kitchen, where everything had been turned upside down. We trod on a litter of all kinds of things—papers, utensils. Everything had been pillaged. We found two pots of jam hidden in the chimney.

"Inside the church things were arranged in complete silence. Talking was forbidden: the bread was distributed. We arranged ourselves on some benches with such blankets as the women had been able to find. Now and then an officer

and some soldiers went the rounds. Nobody dared close an eye.

"At 4 a.m. we had to go out, and returned to the battle, to the same place." (The woman said this as if it had been, "We went back to the market.")

"The day passed very slowly. It became hot. Two civilians were detailed to fetch water, escorted by sentries. And all the time shells kept flying overhead in both directions. At five in the evening an officer told us, 'You are going to be shot (*fusillés*)!'" "He pronounced it '*fusilés*,'" said the French girl, who even at so tragic a moment retained her quickness of observation.

While the frightened flock were giving way to lamentations, a young girl of twenty-four, Jeanne Beyer by name, got up. Going straight up to the officer without any sign of fear, she said to him courteously and clearly: "Why do you want to shoot us? Haven't we always done what you told us to do? Have *you* no parents and brothers and sisters and wives, that you would make us suffer like this?" After that he quieted down, and a moment later drew back.

These few words conjure up the whole scene: the nonplussed officer, staring at the village girl who stood there in front of him and dared to ask him questions; around her the mob of silent peasants, spellbound by her daring, regaining hope

as they listened to this brave young voice raised in their defence; the officer turning away, defeated.

At nightfall they came down from the Hauts de Meuse and returned to the church, where, after boiled potatoes had been distributed, they lay down on the flagstones to sleep.

Next day they thought they would have to go back to "the battle," but nothing happened. Six days passed. The women did the cooking on tombstones in the graveyard. People changed their linen—they had little enough of it—in the confessional.

One morning they were told that Combres was about to be bombarded, and were led to Herbeuville, some two kilometres away. The people of Herbeuville were shut up in the church; those of Combres remained standing in the middle of the road. Some bombs burst; then they sank to the ground, sitting in the dirt. An order went round: "All the men from Combres and Herbeuville must fall in, as they are going to start."

The women uttered cries and clung to their husbands: it was a cruel moment. Jeanne Beyer stepped forward and asked the officer: "Sir, will you allow my sister and me to go with our old father, who is seventy?" "No, miss," he answered. "We are going too far; we are off to Metz."

To Metz! So far . . . to Germany! When would one see them again? When would they come back?

Then came the last despairing embracings. Nothing was spared to these poor people of Combres and Herbeuville.

They saw the long procession of men move off and turn their heads back, ever looking behind them. And the women had to go in the opposite direction—two trains of folk who loved one another and were torn apart.

The women and children returned to Combres, and spent another four weeks cooped up in the church. On October 18 they had to leave, and on the 23rd they slept in the Rastadt cells.

I listened to this story without saying a word, and at times I turned my eyes from the two sad faces and looked at the country darkling under the overcast sky. It seemed to me that all this suffering thus set forth by them, and all that they had not spoken of but could be guessed, was pursuing us through the night.

The tale goes on, scattered with details which give it the ring of truth, without a word of abuse; these women speak in a steady voice of good and bad alike. The young girl says:

"In the train in Germany we had no bread. But some was given to the soldiers, and the soldiers shared theirs with us."

The mother takes her up: "They had put the sick on carts, and there were plenty of sick! They brought an old woman wrapped up in her eiderdown. She died during the journey. At the first village we came to they stopped in front of the cemetery and buried her while still quite warm."

"Yes!" said an old man opposite who had been listening silently, "what they are telling you is true of all our villages."

He stopped, and looked out of the window at the passing trees outlined against the dappled sky.

An old peasant woman who had not yet spoken, sitting motionless with her hands folded under her apron, suddenly broke in:

"Ah! war is a great misfortune!"

My eyes roved round the carriage over these still, mute women among their sleeping children. I thought of the train that passed yesterday, of that which will pass to-morrow, with the same groups, the same expressions, the same tragedies —a chorus of sorrow breaking out suddenly. And I saw invaded France, Belgium, Poland, Serbia—all that suffering humanity.

Dear God!

THE PROCESSION OF VICTIMS AT ZURICH

It was at the beginning of March, 1915, that Zurich took her share of the work in hand, as the convoys of refugees now halted for a longer time and the morning train ran straight through to Zurich.

The small committee, which had served well enough so far, as it had little enough to do besides busying itself with taking hot drinks to the train, now had its numbers greatly increased. Henceforward the convoys arrived at seven in the morning and did not leave till half-past ten. About two hundred persons worked at the station under the direction of the committee. There was plenty to do every day in preparing the reception on the next. Each morning one had to give breakfast to five hundred people, besides getting them to wash and providing them with garments; to bathe and reclothe the children; and to tend the sick. There was never any difficulty in enrolling kind nurses, male and female. Everyone felt greatly encouraged by the splendid energy of the population. It can truly be said

that the town of Zurich, like that of Schaffhausen, dedicated itself to the work. Rich and poor—and the very poorest of the poor—lent a hand. Those who had no money to give gave their time. A paper-seller sewed fifty-two children's shirts. Every day anonymous parcels of woollen goods, knitted articles, and clothing came in. On one of these parcels was written: "I give this clothing because I know what wretchedness is."

One day a peasant woman came to look for the president of the committee. She had her market basket on her arm, and wore the little bonnet of the Zurich countrywomen. Presently she sat down, drew out a large, countrified-looking purse, and said in the Zurich patois:

"Monsieur le Pasteur, every time I go to market to sell my eggs I set aside a few sous, and at the end of the year I give them to the very poor. I was told this morning that these folk who pass through the station are the poorest of all. Is that so?"

M. Cuendet assured her that it was. Had they not lost everything?

Then she emptied the contents of her purse into her apron. On being counted, the twenty and fifty centime pieces came to more than thirty francs.

She started off, but, overcome by doubts, turned back on the doorstep and, to make quite

certain, again asked: "Are they really the poorest, Monsieur le Pasteur?" He replied: "Just arrange to see them go by when we are taking them to the Museum; and if you find that they are not the poorest I will return you your money."

Some days afterwards, as he was leading his slow and miserable flock along the street, he suddenly heard himself hailed in a loud voice, and there he saw, planted on the pavement among the crowd of onlookers, the old peasant woman.

"Oh, sir! Yes! you are right! Certainly they are the poorest of all people. Take this!"

She emptied her purse, which contained the morning's takings—twelve and a half francs.

Another day Mme. Cuendet was visited by a very modest-looking, shy woman, who refused the chair offered her and remained standing by the door. Suddenly, without a word, she held out a thousand-franc note, and went away, refusing to give her name—"because in such cases one ought to remain anonymous."

Some time later the president saw a very simply dressed woman enter his room. She behaved in just the same way, would not sit down, and laid a thousand-franc note on the table. He stared at her in amazement. Her appearance, that of a poor working woman, respectable and

diffident, reminded him of the description given by his wife of her visitor.

" Won't you let me write down your name ?" he asked.

She shook her head and said, just like the other: " It is quite useless; besides, we are all brothers." Then she withdrew.

He had not recovered from his emotion when Mme. Cuendet returned. She said to him: " It's a funny thing, but I have just met on the stairs my giver of the other day." He replied: " She has brought another thousand francs for the repatriated French !"

Even more than by the things given them are these poor creatures moved by the affection which the German Swiss show them in acts of gentle pity, and all those little services which they are so anxious to proffer: " You see, it is so long a time since anyone troubled themselves about us."

We mention these facts and figures and touching expressions of thanks only because it seems right to emphasize things which prove how sympathetic the people of Eastern Switzerland were with the French exiles, and the eagerness of a whole people to proclaim its brotherhood with these poor victims in the only possible manner —by opening its heart to them and bringing its offerings.

Our guests felt this deeply. With an intuition sharpened by suffering they would say: "Your language is not ours, but your hearts are our hearts."

It was not merely a case of showing sympathy, but a protest, a revolt of conscience against such a war, for which these people were certainly not responsible.

The towns in which the exile trains stopped only a few minutes were anxious to bear their share of the common work. A friend of mine, on the Berne Committee, told me of the following incident:

In the course of the previous winter, as she needed clothes for the refugees, she inserted a short appeal in German in all the Bernese papers, which appeared on the following day. The evening papers came out at about four o'clock, when she happened to be away from home. On returning, soon after six, she was astounded to find that already a great number of parcels had been handed in. The sight moved her to tears.

On the days following, gifts continued to pour in and fill the rooms—right up to the ceilings, she said. It took two packers and six assistants four days to despatch them.

Many districts, notably Saint-Gall and Winterthur, sent clothes to Zurich and Schaffhausen, and to Buchs for repatriated Italians. In the

canton of Fribourg every village sent its contributions.

Did we really give anything to these French refugees ? Do we not owe them the least bitter hours of these last few months—hours in which we felt the oneness of Swiss hearts, the blending of wills in a great common effort ? Ah ! how our poor guests brought us together ! They were the bond of union between our furthest frontiers at Schaffhausen and Geneva. Though we often admired their resignation and their undiminished serenity; though we loved them for a quick responsiveness which misfortune had made soft and tender and sensitive to the least sign of affection, we loved them yet more for restoring us to our better selves.

The Zurich Committee received some beautiful letters of thanks from the repatriated. " My heart was full when I saw your country overflowing with tenderness to us," wrote one old man. " Be assured of our everlasting sympathy with your country," wrote another. Switzerland they described as " The nation that shall ever be our sister."

Besides these came collective letters, for instance, that of five hundred French refugees from the Marne Department who held a meeting at Dijon before dispersing:

" They had no words to express how comforting to them, after the long months of suffering under German domination, had been the warm, brotherly reception given them at Zurich and Geneva.

" They knew beforehand that Switzerland was hospitable and pitiful to those in trouble, yet they had been astonished and overcome by the care and kindness lavished on them. When entering Switzerland they seemed to be entering their own motherland.

" What went to their heart even more than this priceless attention was the lively sympathy shown everywhere with France.

" Never will they forget the intelligent and devoted care shown them, nor the shouts of 'Long live France!' which greeted them everywhere during their journey.

" And so, when resolving that this letter should be sent to the Committees at Zurich and Geneva to thank them for the receptions they organized, before they dispersed they uttered one cry of gratitude: 'Long live Switzerland!' "

Here is another letter sent by a little village to the Zurich Committee, signed by one hundred and three persons:

" Being deeply touched by the account which has just been given them by a refugee from Meurthe-et-Moselle of the brotherly, kindly wel-

come met with in Switzerland, the ladies of the Patriotic League of Frenchwomen in one town have made it their sacred duty to express at length their deep gratitude for those affecting proofs of sympathy and those delicate attentions. . . . That welcome was an untold comfort, a healing balm to the wound just inflicted on their hearts, when they were torn from their homes after already enduring the many sufferings of eight months' captivity under the heavy and humiliating yoke of Germany.

"You may be assured, dear friends in Switzerland, that the hearts of us Frenchwomen will ever beat with yours and will never forget you."

In conclusion, I quote from a letter written by some little schoolgirls at Trévoux. It is so pretty and touching that I should like to reproduce it in its entirety.*

"DEAR FRIENDS IN SWITZERLAND,

"We have felt so thankful to you that we had to cry. Some articles from the newspapers were read to us in class describing how our fellow-

* I select these letters from among a large number simply for their documentary value. They seem to me to be such as to dispel an unfortunate misapprehension, by showing the real feelings of the people of German-Switzerland towards the French. Moreover, these spontaneous revelations of feeling do all honour to those whose names they bear.

countrymen interned in Germany were welcomed at Schaffhausen, Zurich, Lausanne, and Geneva. We saw them arrive at Trévoux, the town in which our school is.

"It was on a Sunday in February. We can still hear them singing the 'Marseillaise' as they entered the station. Next day they told us what a fine welcome you gave them. They were foul, and you made them clean, showing no repulsion at this unpleasant work; they were hungry, and you fed them; they were cold, and you warmed them. What garments they had were in rags, and you gave them warm clothing. We have ourselves seen the fine, warm, and still spotless 'polos,' the comforters, and the jackets which they received from your hands. Our unfortunate brothers were sad and cast down by all their suffering and misery, and you spoke to them words of love and tender pity. You realized that nothing could be sweeter to people who for six months or more have endured a hard slavery at an enemy's hands than to hear the stirring air and vengeance-breathing words of our dear 'Marseillaise'; and—a delicate attention which appealed to us more than anything else—they were sung by your young girls. During the Easter holidays we have seen some more of these unhappy prisoners, and they have told us the same story, with the same quiver of gratitude in their voices.

"We, too, should dearly like to see a Swiss and tell him how our hearts swell with thanks and admiration for your noble nation. Since we cannot convey this in actual speech, we decided to write you this letter, as you simply must be told what we feel.

"The study of our nation's history had already made us aware of your generosity. We know that you showed the same kindness when you gave asylum to Bourbaki's ill-starred army in 1871. The other day we had to write out for dictation a passage from one of our great writers about the entry of our soldiers into Switzerland. We still remember one sentence which draws an unforgettable picture: 'At this sight the inhabitants, who had come up in hundreds with gifts in their hands, burst into tears. They came from the towns with clothing, bread, money, meat, and drinkables; even the poorest gave something.'

"Dear Swiss friends, to-day, as in 1871, you show us that pity, generosity, and charity still endure, though for months past and even at the moment of writing the cannon thunder and men are killing one another.

"We thank you, dear Swiss friends, from the bottom of our hearts for all you have done. Many thanks on behalf of all the poor mothers, children, and old people you have fed, clothed, and comforted; many thanks to you from us little French

schoolgirls who are your neighbours, as our department borders your country. And we can thank you with all confidence in the name of all the youth of France, which endures, wonders, and hopes at this awful and terrible hour. We, the young people who are called the France of to-morrow, will never forget you.

"THIRD-YEAR PUPILS OF THE HIGHER-GRADE PRIMARY SCHOOL AT TRÉVOUX, AIN DEPARTMENT."

(Here come the signatures of thirty-two pupils.)

* * * * *

On this cold morning in December, 1915, it was still quite dark when, at half-past seven, the train was signalled, bringing 498 persons, including 139 children under twelve years of age, from Lille.

The train came in slowly. At the windows we could see small pale faces pressed together round the tired faces of their mothers. The travellers were made to alight from carriage after carriage, and led in numbered detachments to two huge dining-halls, where they were immediately given places at the tables. As soon as the first detachment was seated the doors opened again to admit the people from the second carriage; then those of the third. In this manner the five hundred guests, led by white-bloused Zurich girls, were

distributed quickly, quietly, and in a most orderly fashion. What sad, weary, downcast faces! There were melancholy young women surrounded by children, some old people, some young boys—but no men. They looked like poor townsfolk; but here and there was a group of peasants from the surrounding villages. They had been evacuated to Lille. For the second or even the third time they had had to leave their chance lodgings and set out again.

Many of them seemed scared and anxious. They had been told "over yonder" that they would get a bad reception in Switzerland, and some of the old people had refused to budge.

Already some of the refugees began to smile. While looking after their children, the women managed to say a few words. They spoke of the high cost of living, of the shortage of money, the many vexations, and the anguish they had endured, of the bombs that had recently fallen among them. One of them added: "Ah! when one has children it is so very dreadful. If one had none, and there were only one's self to think of!"

At the end of one of the tables was an old priest. What a number of these old priests we have seen pass through! Their parishioners kept close to them, as to a remnant of their old church. Their mere presence brought assurance

and memories of the village steeple to the weeping band.

The priest now rose and said a few words of warm thanks. The president of the Committee went up to him and thanked him, saying, as he shook his hand, "Monsieur le Curé, we are colleagues, for I am the Protestant minister."

Again the priest stood up. After a moment's silence he exclaimed: "Well, then, sir, let us embrace," and embrace they did.

This priest asked me whether our soldiers were always on the frontiers. When I replied that this was so, and remarked that it is sometimes a difficult matter to mount guard on hills and heights covered with deep snow, a poorly dressed woman at my side held out two one-franc coupons with the words, "For your soldiers."

Meanwhile a detachment of territorial troops dining in the next room made a collection among themselves to supply the refugees with small Swiss flags.

The first squad finished its meal and was led away to the clothing depot by a male and a female guide. The rest waited their turn in the warm rooms attached to the buffet.

Away they go down the street, wherein the dawn is breaking, and passers-by flock round them, eager and brotherly. They cross the magistrate's courtyard at the Museum, or go down into one

of the basements. Footwear is attended to first of all. Ladies briskly ask what is needed, examine the sizes, and fit each person with what he requires. Then come clothes and underwear. Here is the children's table, there the table for men's coats. There is haste without confusion. The first detachment is attended to, and passes out through one door as the second detachment enters through another.

On the station platform the refugees make a hurried toilet in front of their respective carriages at trucks on which are washing-basins and jugs of hot water. Mothers comb out their little daughter's hair—they are fair-haired, these children of Lille. The president distributes toys among them. One would like to be able to stop in the babies' carriage. What a concert of small voices! Just watch them sneezing, with their tiny faces all tears or laughter, and the girls, their kindly nurses, leaning over the baths and washing, scrubbing, and then dressing them, and converting the dirty little baggages of a short time ago into beautiful, well-cared-for babies. What a triumph follows when they are returned to their mothers, and the latter hesitate a moment before recognizing them!

The carriages are now rolling away, and all the bodies leaning out of them wave a last farewell. Already the train is a long way off,

and one can distinguish only the fading outline of handkerchiefs being waved continuously, till at last the carriage disappears entirely in the distance.

* * * * *

It was thus that echoes of sufferings at Lille reached us. Piecemeal, little by little, we were able to reconstruct the story of the last months spent there. That morning three whole tables in the refreshment room were filled by boys and girls from the workhouse at Lille. The girls are of all ages up to sixteen, but only quite young boys were allowed to leave. What poor, pale, wretched little faces they had, so dull, sad, and wise-looking! They sat there in front of their bread and cheese awaiting leave to begin to eat. The doctor who accompanied them hoped to be able to return to Lille. On several occasions the Germans took to the workhouse small children found beside dead parents in a shelled farm; but it was difficult to save the most weakly of them, owing to shortage of milk. Fortunately the Americans sent in a supply of Nestlé. At times coal ran out, and alcohol had to be burned on a plate near the babies when they were being undressed to protect them against the severe cold.

Refugees told us that typhoid fever had become

very virulent. But the worst martyrdom at Lille was the awful silence that hemmed them in. To have no news of dear ones who were known to be exposed to death continuously was torture to wives and mothers, an anguish clouding every moment of the day.

As they alighted some of them were weeping as if they could not stop. "*He* could not come and see us before war broke out, and now he is gone—I am sure of it, for he is in Class 17." "No! no! madam. Class 17 has not yet been called to the colours; you are going to see him again."

Oh! how joy lightened up the tear-streaked face! At first the mother could not believe the news; then she became calm and murmured with a sob:

"But he will have to go, and I have none but him."

* * * * *

"When war was declared I was able to escape with my wife, my two children, and sister—who was expecting a child—and her two children. We tramped fifty miles in six days, and as much as nineteen miles in one day. We carried the little ones turn and turn about when they could walk no longer. Our youngster of four did seven and a half miles in two hours. The roads were so blocked that we had to make wide detours. One

woman lost her baby. . . . It was impossible to take anything with us. We ate as best we could. Some people who were driving their cows gave us milk for the children. At Soissons a bridge was blown up behind us just after we had crossed over it. At last we were able to take the train. But never, never since then have we managed to get word of our old folk who stayed yonder."

While in the carriage crowded with Roubaix families I remembered this story, told me by a wounded soldier in hospital, and those words haunted me—" Never, never have we been able to get news. . . ."

Many others uttered the same cry of despair—husbands, fathers, sons. . . . I can see again the sadness in their eyes. They would weep all night under their blankets. Christmas caused them unbearable suffering; every day when their comrades got their letters they suffered cruelly. I can see again the desperate look of a young soldier who had quite lost sight of his wife and four children: " Oh ! if I only knew whether they are still alive !"

Nowadays we see the other side of the picture: hearing the agonized cry which goes up from invaded cities, the cry which for a year and a half was lost in the silence. Will these voices ever unite again ? For how many will it be too late ? How many of them will get no answer ?

We have just left Zurich. We have had our last look at the Zurich nurses and members of the Committee drawn up on the platform. As the train rolled out all the refugees burst into tears, overcome by their reception, and feeling that they had to face certainties which perhaps would be terrible. Some of them tried to express their gratitude.

"We never believed that happiness was so near us. . . ." Said another: "In Switzerland we discovered France. We shall never forget all this."

Then they took their seats again, and pulled up the windows. Each returned to his thoughts, and the old pain, which had been dispelled for the moment, came back to confront him.

Tears ran down the face of a young woman who kept her eyes fixed on her little daughter. From time to time she told her beads. Her large wide-open eyes seemed to gaze at things not of this earth.

Her husband was fighting. She had last heard of him in February, and it was now December.

"Ah!" she said, "I have prayed so hard to God that I may meet him again, and my little girl prays every day, too. But so many others ask the same thing who . . ."

She breaks off; she does not like to put her

thought into words, for do not the right words seem to bring the sorrow back again ?

Her travelling companions also wrap themselves up in long periods of silence. All their acts and looks betray the obsession that obtrudes itself between them and the things of daily life. I cannot take my eyes off all these little fair-haired, pretty, red-cheeked children playing and prattling at their mothers' sides—children who, perhaps, are orphaned. Quite a young woman sits in a corner with a little girl on her knees.

" Is that your child ?"

" No !" She had adopted the little waif. She is a working woman who makes soldiers' clothes, and is going to her mother at Paris.

" Oh ! I do hope that I shall find my people well and get work at once," she says, looking at the child. She has lost all she possessed even to her savings-bank book ; everything was taken from her. With fine energy she continues : " Possessions don't matter, if only we see each other again."

She confides to me that she means to try to rent a room on the same floor as her mother.

" What will your mother say when she sees your little adopted daughter ?"

She smiles prettily and answers :

" My mother falls in with all my whims," and adds confidentially : " You see, when one marries

one is not always happy. Isn't that so? *I*, at any rate, shall have a staff for my old age to lean upon."

* * * * *

The women now begin to talk, exchanging their anxieties and recollections. Ah! living in Roubaix, with butter at ten francs a kilogramme! Many people had to give up meat. What would they have done but for the supplies of cereals, rice, and condensed milk sent by the Americans? The children hadn't done so badly, as the mothers went without for their sake.

A young woman of retiring and refined appearance remarked: "Moral sufferings were the hardest to bear. Otherwise we managed to get along. . . ."

A dark, energetic woman, married to a Swiss, tells how she tried to escape. She managed to leave the town with her little daughter, and they tramped along all day, hiding when necessary, and keeping to by-roads. She carried the little girl. In the evening, just before reaching a village where they meant to sleep, a German soldier levelled his rifle at them. She caught up her child, and was arrested, taken back to Roubaix, and thrown into prison.

"Almost all the women have been to prison," said one of the women. "In some cases for buying contraband potatoes at the frontier."

Some of the women got letters secretly from their husbands—letters which came mysteriously, brought by somebody who disappeared without saying a word. Sometimes "they" held a search, when a neighbour had betrayed the happy recipients. If the letter was found, "they" gave the woman the choice of paying a fine or going to prison; and money was generally so scarce that more often than not prison was chosen. Perhaps one of these secret messengers was captured. He was shot, and the letters on him gave away all the names of the guilty ones. Punishment followed promptly.

Many a woman, on receiving one of these mysterious letters, realized quite well that she ought to destroy it. But she could not make up her mind to destroy that letter, the last souvenir, maybe, of the loved one. So letters were concealed in all sorts of unlikely hiding-places.

They told me of the thousand-and-one annoyances and continual punishments inflicted on them. "At the very hottest season we were forbidden to be out of doors after five o'clock in the evening." They had to have passes to go from one part of the town to another.

They showed me cardboard sous which now are substituted for all small coinage; they told me their stories with emotion, instancing cases, recalling what had happened to a friend. All

these parallel accounts bear one another out with wonderful exactness.

Some wives had been informed by prisoners taken to Germany of their husbands' deaths; others had heard no news. Nothing at all was known of the quite young people who went away on September 9. This brought them to describe that horrible incident. The fair woman with the quiet manner speaks, while the others nod assent, break in, or recall overlooked details. In other carriages other women take up the same story.

On September 9, 1914, when the Germans were approaching, the order was given that all auxiliary troops—young men of eighteen and nineteen—who had not been mobilized on the first day of the war should clear out. The first detachment managed to get away, but the Germans spied the rest and, taking them for francs-tireurs, opened fire on them with machine-guns and rounded them up. These defenceless, unarmed boys, scared by the bullets, made off and threw themselves into ditches. Some were able to strike the road and get back to Roubaix, where they were captured later on; many were taken prisoners, and many were wounded or killed. Many of them were not heard of again. Those who got away had stories to tell. . . . Ah! how closely these mothers listened! When I hear this talk memories come

back to me. How often our thoughts went out to the cities whose martyrdom we pictured! It seems now as if the veil were suddenly rent, as we watch their sufferings. And we can do nothing to comfort them. . . .

The country is dazzlingly white in the sunshine. Villages appear among the snow-covered fields. Bernese houses with large-tiled roofs give place to the houses of Zurich. Family groups stand at the windows and in the gardens, and children wave French flags at us. We hear the shouts of welcome. Everywhere along the roads and in the villages, at level-crossings and almost on the track itself, people wait to greet us. Whenever we stop, a crowd flocks into the station and shakes hands, looking with tearful eyes into the eyes of the repatriated French. When we start off again, I lean out of the window and watch the distant groups moving away slowly with shoulders bent. I can interpret their silence: they carry away with them the misfortunes of the poor creatures they have just had a sight of, the sorrow and anguish which exales from this long, ill-omened train. And as they go their ways through the village, these men and women feel vibrate within them all the ties which bind them to land and house, and, like the Zurich peasant woman, think, "These are the poorest of all. . . ."

* * * * *

To-day I am haunted by these processions of war victims, and two things blend themselves insistently in my memory: pictures of two villages in the war zone—one destroyed, one invaded.

There is a village right at the front near Rheims. Not a house in it is now standing. On both sides of the road one saw a long vista of ruins knocked all to pieces and crumbling continually under the impact of new shells. One could descry through gaping holes in the walls gardens littered with small stones and trying to bloom—a spared branch of lilac, cherry boughs.

One knows the sight so well: we have read about it in the papers, and we have heard the refugees speak of it a hundred times—"Everything has been smashed up at our place." As we walked among these remains of farms, it seemed impossible to believe what one saw, and I, too, felt stunned as by an unforeseen catastrophe.

This, then, is the sight that they had before them, and contemplated with a sad, fixed gaze, which we vainly tried to distract. How many times have they said to me: "Anyone who hasn't seen it cannot imagine what it is."

Yet, in spite of all this, they were unable to make up their minds to leave the ruins! Here are the two last inhabitants, who left but a fortnight ago—under compulsion. These gutted houses were still "home" for them; they were

so accustomed to the growling of the guns, the periodic roar, the long-drawn-out whistling of the shells which made us shudder, that they no longer heeded them.

Slowly we approached the strange form silhouetted against the sky—the remains of the church. Just a bit of the tower has escaped: just a bit of the roof still stands, goodness knows how; a fragment of the doorway still holds up its mosaic tympanum: there is a Christ among His sheep, and below the words "I am the bread of life." The statue of a martyr fallen at the foot of the steps raises its head and seems to protest by gesture and look.

The invaded village seemed to us to be even more pitiful still than the one that had been wrecked. From our observation-post we could see it among the fields, not far from us, silent and apparently deserted under the young foliage. But it is still inhabited, though no smoke rises from its roofs and no peasant stoops over the land close by. Around it stretches the absolutely empty green, sun-kissed plain, seamed from end to end by the hard lines of the trenches, a huge white network which covers the whole expanse: French trenches, German trenches, run on and on in an apparently meaningless fashion, climb the folds of the ground, and are lost to sight in the distant

hills. The only objects that arrest the eyes are the copses of barbed wire. What an empty, deadly plain is this, now so strangely inhabited by invisible inhabitants ! No human being who values his life must show himself for a moment. How can one realize that the Germans are in their burrows quite close, only three hundred and fifty yards away ? How can one imagine that from those blue, soft distances and harmoniously coloured hills death may descend on us every time we hear the guns ? Hostile eyes are all round us; nothing escapes them. An imprudent movement, a head raised thoughtlessly above the screen, and all is over.

It is this which besets and stabs us—this empty countryside stretched round these farms, the dim outlines of the hills, death moving everywhere under this hot springtide sun—death in its loneliness, mistress of all, holding all this stretch on which man has enthroned it, who alone walks in these wonderful fields and visits the invaded village.

My eyes keep turning back to it, so near and yet more inaccessible than a village in another world. The commander's field-glasses enable me to examine it at close quarters. It seems as if I could touch these farms, knock on their doors, go inside and look for their mysterious occupants.

They are there, no doubt, bent, obedient, undergoing a thousand restraints, harassed in a thousand ways. They are at home, yet not at home. They are no longer masters of their business, their time, their cattle, scarcely even of their lives—which are theirs only if they do not disobey orders. They live lives of terror, grief, and torture. Their nights are hag-ridden. They just wait. And when they see the lilac burst into flower again their one thought is: "For the second time, this, since we were invaded."

They know nothing. Do they know, in this springtime of 1916, that henceforward they have something to hope for? Scanty news will at last be able to cross the iron circle, and they will soon learn whether their sons are dead.

While I watched this village heaped in ruins among the fields, hedged about and dismal, the words of the refugees returned and hovered around me, and became a terrible reality in the presence of actual suffering. Their wailing seemed to rise from the captured farms and reach us across the spaces which it filled with its despair.

Lille, Roubaix, Valenciennes, and many others! Dumb cities, villages round which silence has reigned for almost two years: your desolate look will haunt me henceforward. You have spoken

to me with the voice of these refugees who were driven from you into exile. They have made us feel your suffering. As we tend them and drink in their words, our hearts go out to you.

We know, too, that hope upholds you, and that you live with your eyes upon the future.

THE PROCESSION OF VICTIMS AT GENEVA.

ALMOST every day for week after week from the end of the autumn of 1914 the station at Geneva saw trains come in filled with these unhappy travellers. The interned civilians crowded to the windows of the carriages, which were kept locked, and stared at the committee-men drawn up on the platform. But not one of them went through the almost automatic action of leaning out and opening the door. They were accustomed to discipline.

At last we made them alight, which they did with leisurely haste. Their hands were encumbered with all kinds of incongruous baggage—badly tied up cardboard boxes, bloated string-bags, parcels sewn up in canvas, baskets, and overworked valises. Some women carried their babies and led the older children by the hand.

In a twinkling the platform was invaded by a silent crowd with wretched, sad faces: women, more women, children, young people, old people, all weary and clad in worn-out, dirty clothes.

They are the replica of the convoy which went through yesterday, and just like those which will

come to-morrow. All have the same obedient, resigned look of folk accustomed to long endurance. They approach the exit. Those behind begin to run. They fill the staircase and subway. Presently they are arrayed in column between the stewards, civilian police, auxiliary relief workers, and Samaritans. Then off they go to the welcome awaiting them at the school at Pâquis or in the Rue de Berne. A sad procession is this. The strong daylight reveals their blotched complexions, their swollen faces, the disorders of their dress. Some are so footsore in their broken shoes that they must be helped to walk. Old people, too weary to stand, are supported. Women weep silently: their neighbours take their arms. Everybody helps everyone else, and this gives an impression of brotherliness which one does not see in light-hearted crowds.

Even the folk over there, who are better clad than the rest, and whose jewels speak of affluence, have the same subdued look. One might describe this as a great flock of human sheep going quietly to its fate.

Least unfortunate are those who were captured during a summer excursion, and who finished their holiday in some convent or abandoned factory in the French province, or in a concentration camp in Western Germany. Listen to this old French Alsatian woman:

" I had worked hard for twenty-five years, and wanted to take my daughters to my old village in Alsace. We started on July 24. . . ."

All the still young women have been separated from their husbands, detained in enemy country —for how long ? With what a gesture they enfold their children in their skirts, as they shed sad tears, soon checked.

The sight of them takes one suddenly into the awful situations created by the war. It bares the disorder of lives which in a day were robbed of common rights, snatched from the world, separated from those dear to them.

Frenchwomen married to Germans, German women married to Frenchmen, cast off by their own people, and driven from their native land, unfortunates whose brothers fight on one side and the husband, maybe the son, on the other— their hearts are torn by a double agony, their dumb despair is as a mask on their faces.

" It wasn't possible to get a divorce, was it ? Then, you know, you get to love one another all the more after suffering so much together."

Some of these lonely women tell us: " I am going to Germany, where I don't know a single soul, and I cannot speak German. What sort of a reception shall I get yonder ?"

All their past is a blank, and they dare not think of the future.

* * * * *

One day there came a convoy of Hungarians and Dalmatian Italians. All the young women had babies in arms. Many of them were very pretty, with their bright eyes, white teeth, and dark complexions. They wore gaily-coloured kerchiefs on their black, plaited hair. On this dull day of the late autumn they seemed to bring with them a touch of Eastern splendour into the room. Despite their obvious wretchedness, these women did not appear crushed or frightened. No doubt, travelling had no surprises for them, and they were quite ignorant of the complexities of civilized life. The sight of them made us think of the gipsy tribes which roam on the open plains bordering the Black Sea.

I remember one of them, a bareheaded woman with wrinkled face, golden skin, and slender hands, who spoke in unintelligible German—an unmistakable gipsy. She had sons who played in an orchestra and had been detained "down yonder."

"She had spent her whole life travelling," said an old man who had come up to act as interpreter. The old nomad could no longer endure her shoes, which galled her. No doubt she had been accustomed to do all her travelling barefoot. She was given some cloth sandals, into which she joyfully inserted her tiny feet. She expressed her thanks by a curtsey, so graceful,

smiling, and dignified that one of us exclaimed in admiration, "She has the manner of a queen!"

A queen!—the ruler of more than a narrow kingdom, owner of all space, of all the world's beauty, was this old gipsy who had travelled "all her life," preferring (to mere comfort) the boundless liberty of one who owns nothing.

I still seem to see another wanderer, a grey-haired shepherd in his long coat and sabots, who recalled the patriarchal life in tents, with its bivouac fires and long, lonely tramps across country behind a flock of leisurely, jostling sheep. He spent the whole afternoon in the courtyard with his dog, "so that he should not disturb people." He was on his way back to his own country in Alsace, for "there is always work for shepherds." He had a married daughter in Switzerland, but could not remember her address or the name of the town in which she lived. He had lost sight of her, and now his dog was his all. How grateful he was because they fed the animal! A lady of the Committee promised to look after it while he went and got some supper with the convoy in the public kitchens. On returning, he exclaimed, "It was like a wedding-feast!" The lady presented him with a bowl to give his dog drink from during the journey, and he thanked her, adding, "That will do for the two of us."

When he said good-bye he promised the lady who had looked after his one and only friend, "When I get yonder I'll write you a letter, but I should like you to send me a reply." She promised him that she would do so.

Most pitiful of all were the strings of old men, who in a way seem even more destitute and forsaken than the women. Here is an old workman who has toiled all his life in France. He is asked, "Why didn't you get yourself naturalized?" and answers, "I couldn't; no, I couldn't. And I was earning four and a half francs a day."

This rag picker, a short, thick-set man who speaks French perfectly, has lived in France for sixty years, and is sixty-seven years old. He has been operated on twice for cataract, but sees none the better for it. "It is all right during the day," says he, "but when it gets a bit dark I don't know where I am." We gave him an overcoat—a thing he probably had never possessed before—and he protested that he was "clothed like a prince."

Another man, an old shepherd, all doubled up with rheumatism, dragged himself along leaning on his stick. He spoke to us of his flock—three hundred and eighty sheep—and his three dogs. Forty of the sheep belonged to him: they represented all the savings of his long life. When the

Germans came in search of him he had to leave them behind, as there was no time to sell them, and so lost his all. He kept one dog, but had to kill it, and now owned nothing. Then he caught the rheumatism in the shed where he had to lie on straw.

"I shall not be able to mind sheep any longer," he said, "and shall have to be helped."

Victims of the war! It is not only the splendid, strong soldiers who lay down their lives, or who come back, disabled, to a darkened existence. They at least get some glory, and enjoy the feeling of having fulfilled a primary duty; for them there are decorations, pensions—above all, the respect and admiration of their neighbours, of the whole country.

But who shall comfort these humble victims—all those who unknowingly, and often without realizing it, are engulfed in disaster, and who also pay the penalty with their health, with the loss of the hard-won competence, with their happiness, maybe with life itself? They, too, have done their duty all their life through. And the misfortunes that have swooped down on them are the harder to bear in that they seem inexplicable and profit their country not at all.

These victims are whole populations over whom the invasion swept, who have passed through weeks and months of terror, for whom life will

never again be as it was before. When one tries to sum up such suffering one feels the grip of agony and horror, and it seems as if one would never dare again to think of the future.

* * * * *

Weeks passed by. We saw people come in who had been rounded up in Germany or captured at the time of the invasion, dwellers in districts near the frontier—Longwy, Audun-le-Roman, Blamont, Cirey, Badonviller, Dompierre-au-Bois, and many other villages with pretty French names which now have an ominous ring.

These men and women alighted from the carriages encumbered with miscellaneous baggage, poor articles snatched up hastily in the confusion of a hurried departure, rammed into baskets, wrapped up in cloths, packed into dirty old haversacks which had doubtless seen war service, or tied up in potato-bags. Their appearance gives one a striking impression of what the exodus must have been, the exodus of a whole people terrified by fire and bursting shells, as they fled in fear of the enemy, carrying off their little ones, and forgetting in the last panic-stricken moments to take absolutely necessary things with them. When they collected on the station platform in an unhappy mob, all said just the same thing—"We have nothing else; just that."

Before leading them off their baggage had to

be disposed of, and this was not always an easy matter. Old women kept going back to their bundles, unwilling to believe that they would get them again, later on, at Annemasse; for amid the general shipwreck these poor relics were their sole remaining property, and they trembled at the mere thought of losing them.

"Let me have your basket; they are going to drive you in a motor-car," said a steward to a sick old woman whom he was helping to walk.

"No! no! I can't give it up. I want to keep it with me, or it will get stolen." With a frantic gesture she hugged her basket—now her only possession—which contained a small coffee-pot and a pot of jam!

The clocks are striking seven o'clock in the morning. It is still dark; the wintry dawn breaks slowly. A train has just come in. Evacuated French-people fill the great baggage-hall: the men seated in rows on benches, the women amid groups of children. They look miserable, with their dejected attitudes and lead-coloured complexions. An expression of terrified sadness seems frozen on their faces. They are people from the devastated departments of the Meuse and the Marne who were taken away to Germany, and are now being repatriated, to the number of about three hundred.

In the grey morning light and through heavy rain they are led to the restaurant. The few passers-by stop on the kerb and regard them with dismay. The people of the neighbourhood, accustomed as they now are to see these pitiful convoys pass through, have never yet been in the presence of such distress.

A working man takes off his cape, throws it round the shoulders of an old fellow, and makes off quickly.

After coffee had been served, the procession re-formed and continued its journey to the school in the Rue de Berne. The stewards helped to carry the children, most of whom had coughs. One small girl, enfeebled by bronchitis and fever, fell down in the mud. Some women wore list slippers sopping with water; the old ones moved with difficulty, all doubled up. Old men dragged themselves along, aided by their sticks. Many were wrapped up in brand-new shawls and scarves, given them at Schaffhausen, contrasting strongly with the general poverty of their clothes.

It was now daylight. The procession moved very slowly over the dripping cobblestones. It brought tears to the eyes to turn and watch the sad, pale, weary faces of this crowd of poor people plodding along through the rain. They seemed as it were, to regard misfortune, long wanderings, and endless fatigue as a natural state of things.

They were herded from one place to another without knowing whither they were being taken. They said: "What is to become of us when we get to France?" There is no longer any place that they wish to go to, where they are expected and will feel at home. Their villages—Saint-Rémy, Dommartin, Dompierre-au-Bois, Mouzay, and others—have been bombarded and burnt. Such houses as remain standing have been pillaged from top to bottom. "If only we can find work!" say some of them. That is the only wish that we ever heard them put into words.

Meanwhile the Samaritans' motor-car had taken the most helpless to the infirmary—some paralyzed old men, a refugee who had become insane, and a few poor old women whose legs would not carry them. All the beds are filled, and in the passage five weakly women sit on a bench in a row, awaiting their dinner.

Their ideas are all confused; they do not know where they are; they no longer have any news of their scattered children. They cannot say what countries they have been in—this, that, the other—what does it matter? Yet they can recall, even in the minutest details, one terrible fact: the burning of their houses under their very eyes and the seizing of their livestock. "I had worked hard for fifty-sixty years, and then—this."

Can one realize what such a disaster means to peasants whose whole life and effort have centred in their farms, fields, and cattle? To judge by their rigid, mask-like features, which can no longer show astonishment, they are buried in the ruin of their lives.

However, in the warm hall upstairs these shipwrecked folk appear to cheer up a little, and begin to talk.

When, in August, 1914, the inhabitants of the Meuse fled towards central France to escape the invasion, these people refused to move, preferring to stay in their villages with their cattle. "Ah! if we had only known, for we lost everything just the same," they say, and go on to describe the systematic devastation of their farms and the pillage of their plate, linen, and furniture.

"Our fine furniture," says an old woman, and gives a list: sideboards, cupboards, coppers, presses, wrecked by axes. Floors were torn up, even the doors smashed, and all their little belongings ruined, broken to pieces, and flung on to the dung-heap.

A woman said: "It broke my heart."

"What about your cattle?"

"They took them away, and never gave us a receipt. We have nothing left at home, not even a rabbit."

Most of them have undergone the terrible trials

of bombardment. The Germans made them take refuge in the church, though, as a woman said, "We should have been better sheltered in our barns, because of the hay there."

"When we heard the shells coming," said another, "we went like this"—she seized her child and bent over it—"so that if we were killed the little one should not be hurt." Nothing could be more touching than the way in which she did it: it showed frequent practice.

They were herded in the church for days, crowded together, sleeping as best they could on flagstones covered with a little straw, anxious to go home and fetch a blanket. The story of Dompierre-au-Bois is especially tragic. The Germans who first occupied the place were not destructive, and paid for what they took. Then the French Dragoons drove them out. An old peasant is telling the story: "We were very pleased at this, and offered them flowers. But the Germans returned in swarms, just like ants. They put the whole lot of us in the church, and while we were there pillaged all our houses one after the other. They threatened to shoot us, and for two days we believed that they were coming to fetch us out to execution every time the door opened. Some of the women fainted through fright. . . ."

The Germans had planted batteries and were firing on the Fort of Troyon. The fort replied, and

French shells fell on to the unlucky village. The description reminded me of the regret expressed by a French soldier:* "How could we give freedom without destruction; how win back more than pitiful ruins and the poor survivors whose bitter anguish we realized even as we swept forward in pursuit?

"It is at times like these that one cannot but feel the unbearable horror of temporary loss of land and livelihood. One can understand the full meaning of 'occupation' only where and when it bursts over the heads of its victims.

"There we were, making for the well-known, familiar scene. The others, the occupiers, remained crouching in our houses, under the shadow of our church towers, between which they dig their burrows. We had to fire on them—so we fired."

A young peasant girl interrupted the old man: "Of course our soldiers could not stop firing for the sake of a few civilians. . . . It had to be!"

"A shell burst in the church. Then it seemed as if one could not see properly any longer. Everybody rushed out, and then came back again, when we found that the rest were not following. We saw the dead and wounded—twenty-two dead and seventeen wounded."

* Maurice Gandolphe, *La Marche à la victoire.*

It was a terrible scene: families wiped out; a woman lying dead with her six-weeks-old baby in her arms; another killed while suckling her child, which was found alive in her skirts; a woman about to give birth to a child, with her foot blown off; her husband, father, and mother lying lifeless around her. They took her away to the schoolroom, where she kept screaming for several days lying on the straw. She was then removed to Mars-la-Tour, and was at last able to die, after giving birth to a dead child.

The most severely wounded were left in the church among the dead bodies till the following day. From the uninjured altar the statue of the Virgin looked down on this hecatomb of women, children, and old men.

"My poor wife kept asking for water," said an old man, "but I was not allowed to take her any, and she died thirty-six hours later."

A terrible dialogue begins between the men and women sitting on the benches.

"*I* had my twenty-years-old daughter killed."

"And *I*, my mother and my three sisters."

"And *I*, my husband."

"The very pale little girl you see over yonder is an orphan whom her cousin had adopted. Her cousin was cut in two."

"Ah! when we get together we talk of it, and it seems as if it were all still happening."

They speak of their hurried departure a few days later, and of long tramps along the roads. They had to carry their children when too tired to walk. The wounded went away in carts, several dying before reaching Germany. At Metz a crowd collected to watch them go past, and they saw some of the German ladies weep. They went first to one place, then to another. They were well treated at the barracks, where they spent the last weeks, for the soldiers were reservists with wives and children of their own.

It seems like a dream to listen to these refugees, to whom the worst of misfortunes will henceforward appear quite ordinary happenings. In the future nothing will be able to cause them surprise or emotion. There is a terrible significance in the words, "We have shed all our tears."

At ten o'clock the convoy was taken to the tramway which would transport it to Annemasse. A pitying crowd looked on. Some women, unasked, had brought parcels of clothing to the Rue de Berne, and they cried as they distributed them. Others, standing on the pavement, waited till the French people passed and gave them things. One of them, on hearing an old peasant woman lament an umbrella left "over yonder," cried: "Wait a minute, madam," and soon came back all out of breath, and handed an umbrella to the

poor amazed old woman, apologizing for the fact that "it was not quite new."

Then another came running up with a fine warm cloak, which she laid on her shoulders.

We watched the vehicles disappear in the distance. We asked ourselves: "Where are these people going to? Who will welcome them and help them to regain a little happiness in spite of their terrible memories and regrets for their ruined farms?"

It often happened that the convoy arrived by the 9 p.m. train. The procession was formed quickly, headed by old and helpless men and young boys. Then came the women, many of whom had babies in their arms and little ones clinging to their skirts.

We led them through the night down dark streets to the restaurant, passing between two walls of people who had in some manner got news of our coming, and were waiting for the French unfortunates in respectful, pitying silence. Those of us who carried the children were aware of a shuddering pity and of moving figures which bent over the small sleepers. Outstretched hands offered chocolate, dainties, clothes. A woman took off her woollen scarf and wrapped it round a little girl as she went by.

The refugees were accommodated in two large

rooms of the temperance hotel at Montbrillant, where they were given a hot meal. There were flowers on the tables. Ladies took possession of the little ones so that their mothers might get some food. Milk was served out for the babies and sucking-bottles prepared for the night. Committee-men helped the servants by carrying empty plates. The restaurant proprietor, noticing that a child had scarcely anything on under its dress, exclaimed: "I will go upstairs to see whether my wife hasn't something she can give her."

Under cover of the passing to and fro of the waiters conversation begins, at first in a low voice, then in louder tones. Things are progressing nicely. Tired faces relax; some take on a look of content, others remain sad and anxious. Many of the women have their husband and son at the war, and get no news of them. One woman in deep mourning tells us how her husband was wounded by a bullet, and how she was carried away, leaving him in his agony. Some ask in a distracted manner whether they will be allowed to return home, to districts near the firing-line. Surely their own houses will not be forbidden them ?

All are deeply touched by the general display of sympathy, which they felt immediately after reaching the Swiss frontier. They expected that

they would have to sleep in the stations, but were welcomed and well looked after at Schaffhausen and all along the route—at Zurich, Berne, and Lausanne. They were given clothes, fruit, and other delicacies. At Berne they caught sight of one of our officers, and raised a shout of "Long live Switzerland!"

Our eyes fill with tears as we listen to them, for with the terrible recollections of their sufferings is linked the name of our country, a name that sounds sweetly in their ears.

In the school buildings, where beds have been made up and tables decorated with flowers, the committee-men proceed with the work of administration. We take the women and children into the bathroom, with its hot water, tubs and basins arranged on benches. The toilet of the youngest now begins. Women say to us: "Just fancy, we have been travelling now for three months, now to one village, now to another! Yesterday, at Schaffhausen, for the first time, we had a bed to sleep in and were able to take our clothes off."

The room is soon transformed into a nursery. Babies lying on the beds kick their legs while being rubbed down. Some of them begin to cry; it is late, and they are sleepy. Others are still smiling. All these mites, who have come from far away and gone through so much, are calm and

protected by their wonderful ignorance of things; these little ones lack nothing, so long as they have their mothers' arms around them.

A small boy has undressed himself without help while his mother is busy with the younger children, and stands there naked and smiling, looking at us. While we bend together over the beds and help the mothers to clothe their little ones, they confide to us their troubles and difficulties. One young woman sobs as she swaddles her latest-born, for she has just been told that she will probably not be able to return to her town, which is in the danger zone. She says: "I don't know where to go to now, for I don't know a single soul."

A little girl begins to prattle, for she, too, must have her say. It is: "The Germans took my doll." Her father went off to the war, but he might just as well have stayed with them, as the war came to their village.

I notice a fine, plump, rosy-cheeked infant who smiles at his mother while she performs his toilet. "What a fine baby, madam! What is his age?" She straightens herself, and I see that she is quite young. Proudly she replies: "Four months. I am suckling it, and goodness only knows what horrible things I have eaten to keep my milk. The others were revolted, but I took no notice. I thought only of my baby, and ate whatever came

along. There, now, see how heavy he is." She tests his weight proudly, and says again: "Yes, I have eaten some queer things."

They bring in a child of six years old who has just been attended to in the infirmary. She carries her arm in a sling. "Did the Germans hurt your poor little hand?" She raises a sweet face, very peaceful and pale, and answers in a weak voice: "No, ma'am; we were in the church." Then the women in low tones tell me the story of this lonely little girl, whom one of them charitably took away with her. Her mother, who lives in Paris, sent her and a three-years-old sister to spend the summer with her grandparents at Dompierre-aux-Bois. Dompierre-aux-Bois! Yes, we know that name, for it will always be associated with tragedy. It brings to mind other stories told us by weeping women—of the church gutted by shells, of death falling like a thunderbolt on the crowded refugees.

The little girl's grandparents, uncle, aunt, and sister, were all killed, and now they are taking her back to Paris, and her mother as yet knows nothing.

The picture evoked by this story is almost unbearable in this room filled with the chirruping of the babies: the corpse of the three-years-old child which they carried away, and the older sister escaped by a miracle and following blindly.

"The wounded will never get well," adds an old woman of eighty-two, whose hand has been a long time healing and keeps on discharging.

The babies are in bed, clean and quiet, and falling asleep. The mothers surround the German-Swiss girl who came with them from Schaffhausen. She is about to leave them, and all want to say good-bye and shake her hands and thank her. "Oh, miss! I should dearly like to embrace you;" and these strangers of yesterday exchange kisses.

Meanwhile the old woman continues: "The most terrible thing of all was not the burning of our houses, but our being led away as if we were criminals by German soldiers—soldiers with fixed bayonets!"

What a curiously rustic way of looking at things! The forced departure and military escort appeared to her a disgraceful ending to a long life of honest work. *That* she could *not* forgive.

The surprising feature of all these stories of bombardment and incendiarism is the calm manner in which they are told. No complaints are heard: the loss of property seems to be a matter of course—"What can you expect?—it's war." While middle-class folk, owners of burnt factories, wax indignant and abusive and kick against their fate, these poor people, being accus-

tomed to trouble, speak quite quietly about their losses, without animosity. They have no idea where they are off to, "though, of course, we shall be sent somewhere where we shall be undisturbed." They take everything for granted. "We couldn't prevent things of this kind happening, could we?"

Their misfortune clothes them in a kind of dignity; they have been through so much. In their opinion others are still more unfortunate. "Look at that woman there," they say: "her husband is dead, her house burnt, and she has no news of her son. And that one over there has lost her child." What sweetness is shown by these people, who, though broken-hearted themselves, can still feel compassion for others.

One day, by an unlucky chance which every effort had been made to prevent, a procession of French old men and boys met a convoy of interned Germans in the street, to the great distress of the committee-men. The upshot was quite unexpected. An old Frenchman raised his hat to them with the words: "They are poor devils, just like us!" That was all.

* * * * *

One evening they brought an old French peasant woman into the infirmary. It so happened that, owing to quite unusual circumstances, all the other beds were occupied by German

women. The old lady, sitting in her chair in the quiet and half-darkened room, began to speak. She came from a village near Saint Mihiel which was occupied by the Germans and bombarded, being right in the centre of the battle area. The inhabitants were taken away to Germany, travelling from one place to another—to Sarrebourg, and finally to Saverne, where they were imprisoned. Certainly, they were told that they were not like the other prisoners, but there was no other place for them. The Sisters were very kind to them, and gave them what they had, so it was no fault of theirs that they were badly fed. Then, ladies of Saverne—Alsatians, who sympathized with the French—came to visit them, bringing clothes, linen for the most destitute, food, sausages, etc.

She stops, and her pale, wrinkled face smiles at the recollection. Doubtless she cannot read—she is one of those old peasants whom one still runs across in out-of-the-way country places whose whole life slips quietly away between the narrow boundaries of their farm walls. At times she speaks with animation; at times she falls silent and stares straight before her, as if she saw quite close to her things that had just happened. She says:

" Nowadays I haven't even a chair of my own, not a fork—nothing !"

I ask her: "Was your village burnt?"

She nods assent. "Yes; many houses were burnt."

"But not yours?"

"Yes," she answers, and is silent for a moment, her head bent forward. She has two sons in the army, and two daughters who escaped with her, but have been lost sight of. The village was bombarded for twelve days on end, and all the villagers hid themselves in their cellars. When a cellar fell in, they went into another. She stayed till the very last moment, on account of her beasts, but finally had to let them all loose because the stable caught fire. "Anyone who has not actually seen the thing with his own eyes cannot imagine what it is." She adds: "But what can you expect?—it is war."

But these simple words, interrupted by spells of silence, evoked terrible pictures which gradually filled the room, in which the German women listened silently. One girl, lying on the next bed, raised herself up that she might not lose a word. The old woman continues:

"I can't complain of the German soldiers. They naturally asked us for things; they had to eat, hadn't they? But it wasn't their fault that they were there. They had to fight for their country, as ours fight for ours, and I warrant they would have been glad enough to stay at home.

When food ran out they gave us part of their stew. I used to wash their things for them. When the shells came along, they squeezed themselves with us into the cellars, and we stayed there all together."

She forgets all about the soup, which is getting cold on her knees, and goes on:

"The day on which we had to clear out I was making up the pigs' food. A German officer wrote something on the door. Then the Germans started firing with their cannon over our heads at the French at the bottom of the hill beyond the vineyard. Oh! they didn't bother about looking for grapes!" She stops a moment to smile at her tragic little joke.

"The French on their side fired low at the village, and it was their shells that set our houses on fire. When I saw wounded Germans lying on the ground I began to shed tears for them as for our own men. We were told that we should do well to get away; so we left everything behind —provisions, grapes, cattle. We had to clear out without taking anything with us. The houses were burning—they made a fine bonfire! Yes! it's a terrible war," she adds.

I listened as in a troubled dream to this painful picture of invasion and fighting drawn in the midst of these German women, who gradually ceased to be hostile and allowed themselves to be won over

by the pity which I could read in their faces; and this pity turned into admiration of this ignorant, blunt, simple old body who never complained and still managed to smile. The young German girl took up the story in turn. She had not been interned. She was nurse to an American lady, and had crossed France with her mistress and seen some wounded men. "And those wounded Frenchmen were so bright!" Suddenly she turned to the Lorraine countrywoman and said: "You are quite right, quite right, to smile. One must keep up one's courage at all costs."

It seemed to me that the poor old woman, though robbed of all she possessed, had won a victory by gaining over her enemies and compelling their admiration.

* * * * *

When the repatriated children pass by, clinging to their mothers—the youngest placid and smiling, the older ones in some cases still pale and sad-eyed, and refusing to be cheered up—I always think of a little Lorraine girl whom I knew in a village of Haute-Savoie to which her parents had been evacuated: a little girl of six who glanced round her in a frightened way and "was never seen to smile."

Her mother said that she had been very strong and rosy-cheeked, but had suffered much, and children find it most difficult to bear up. This

woman had the depressed manner of people who have been through endless trouble. She called her little daughter, who sat in a corner with her hands hanging down, to her side. "Now go and play with the others," she said. The country-women, guessing her anxiety, kept saying: "She is so young! She will forget. Just look how these others have picked up already!" But the mother shook her head. "Children are not all alike, are they?"

She was a little fair-haired girl whose grey eyes were always fixed on the distance. But in former days, when she was herself, the day seemed all too short. She would blush with pleasure when the mistress kissed her at the end of class. She was prepared to believe that everyone was kind when a neighbour brought her from Lunéville market some cakes which she shared with her friends. Of an evening she would play on the village green while her elders walked about arm-in-arm. Before going to sleep she said her prayers, convinced that the good God loved her well.

Then the terrible thing happened—rifle-shots fired at men; the flight to the cellars where they huddled together; her father in tears; and then hunger—she dared not say how hungry she was! An old farm-hand had said: "This can't go on much longer; we must have food for the children." Then came the night, and he brought in three

loaves without being detected. The man was never seen again. Of what happened after that she knew nothing. Scenes became all mixed up; terrified faces flitted past her. It was said that the Mayor had gone mad. . . . Then the French troops entered, and they were able to eat and sleep.

But one morning her mother seized her by the hand with the words, "Quick! we must be off!" The whole village was in flight. Some took sacks and wheelbarrows with them, but soon dropped them, to be able to run faster. What horrified her most was the lame old woman whom they had to leave on the roadside, and who kept calling after them in a voice of despair.

At the top of the hill they looked back. All the village was ablaze. She tried to make out their farm among the flames, but her mother dragged her away. They trudged along all day without rest or food, and reached another village. The next day a battle raged all round them. Hidden in a cellar, they could hear the shells bursting and the shrieks and shouts of men. The little girl thought that the end of the world had come. Even God had forgotten them.

A long time went by . . . that was all she knew, for the day was just the same as the night. They heard wounded men calling softly, "Comrades, mercy! mercy, comrades!" but nobody

dared go to them. They still had to escape. Some French soldiers, covered with blood, dragged themselves into the street and asked for water, and the girl was astounded to see her mother turn from them and hurry along. When they got outside the village they had to tread on body after body—Frenchmen, Germans, lying heaped together. And horses, too, with their bellies ripped open. And the blood! . . . Her mother kept dragging her along, saying, "Don't look!" Then the stench, the mere thought of which makes one turn from one's food!

They walked on and on. Her feet became so sore that she did not know how she managed to keep on her legs. A town was seen in the distance, on the edge of the plain; they must reach it. Her father and mother gave her their hands; but how slowly that town approached! At last they were crowded into a waggon, and they went no one knew whither.

To-day they were well off . . . this quiet village was just like their own. People spoke softly to her, but it seemed to her that things would never be the same as "before." Her mother said with a groan: "To think that one has lost everything and that one is among foreigners!"

The little girl was suffering from a more deeply hidden trouble than mere sorrow for their de-

stroyed farm. She could not put it into words, but when she sat with her hosts in the farm-house that was to be her home, and was pressed to eat, her throat seemed to close and she could not swallow.

Other little girls took her by the hand and carried her off with them—friendly and cheerful little girls. The village was surrounded by trees laden with fruit, and grapes ripened on the vines. Poultry picked about on the doorstep, as in old times; the weather was fine; she saw well-known sights again; nothing seemed changed. Other children who had also come from a long way off played about, now quite accustomed to the new life. But she could not do it, and soon they found her sitting by herself, with staring eyes and a pale little face that had forgotten how to smile.

Nothing could reconcile her with a world which she had suddenly discovered to be full of cruelty. Clothes, presents of toys, kind words, even her mother's care, were unavailing to heal the poor injured heart of this trustful and trusting little girl.

She died a little more than two weeks after her arrival. The doctor declared that a slight wound in her foot had become inflamed and set up general blood-poisoning. But her father believed that she had had her blood "curdled" by the sight of so many horrors.

The country-folk standing round the narrow grave shook their heads sadly. To bring a child so far and then see her die in three days!

While the repatriated families pass through our streets I look at the dark or fair heads, the eight to ten year old faces—the age at which suffering begins but cannot yet be understood. How many over-sensitive little girls and precocious boys wake up at night with a start, bathed in sweat, and again pass through those hours of terror!

* * * * *

If only one could tell of all those things: those talks, those extraordinary or heartrending cases! Every day one heard of more distress. One lived in the heart of tragedy, always the same, but always varying and constantly renewed. The nameless horrors of war entered these rooms with every convoy—became the very air which we breathed—and it seemed as though we could never have sympathy and tenderness enough to relieve this burden of disaster.

A woman in mourning with prematurely aged face sat apart, huddled up on her valise, speaking to no one, waving aside the tea offered her, turning her head away when spoken to. A Geneva lady sat down beside her and quietly took her hand. "Whom have you lost?" she asked. Then she said in a low, sad voice, "My little daughter," and added, with eyes fixed on vacancy,

as if she still saw the awful scene: " She was seven years old. A bullet struck her right under my eyes." Then silence; there was nothing to say. The mother continued: " Yet she had done no harm."

The two women were silent: words only wound sorrow like this. The poor woman, who for weeks had been left all alone with her broken heart, felt the love offered her. Suddenly she began to cry, and kept on crying—the first tears that she had been able to shed. The sight of her sitting there sobbing with her face in her hands reminded me of a child's remark which I had lately heard. A teacher asked his pupils, " What does weeping mean ?" The little things were at a loss, as they could not define it.

" Come, now, when does one weep ?" A voice replied: " When one is a little less unhappy."

This lonely woman was perhaps a little less unhappy than before, since she wept. . . .

Such sorrow was not uncommon. We have seen mothers go by who had lost their children through sickness, fatigue, change of life. Some of them were lost in the turmoil of departure; others died in the train.

A young Lorraine girl told me how her sister, who had two children, went out to get them some milk, and found her house blazing when she returned. The two children were shrieking at the

windows. She tried to rush in to them, but the soldiers held her back to save her life. The children were burnt. Nothing more was heard of her: perhaps she became insane.

Many old countrywomen who had never left their village, and had watched it bombarded and burnt, regarded having to leave it as the cruellest blow of all. "Even though all our place had been burned down, one was glad to be there," said one of them.

During one of these journeys I lent an arm to an emaciated, depressed-looking woman who walked with difficulty. I said to her: "You have been through a lot."

Then she gave me an almost brutal nudge, and, with a scared look, whispered: "Can't you be quiet? Didn't you see the gendarme, quite close to us? I believe he heard you."

Poor, bewildered, mind-sick woman! She did not yet understand that she was in Switzerland.

These unhappy creatures were amazed at being shown attention and care, nor could they find words in which to express their gratitude. "Oh, sir, tell me your name, that I may mention it in my prayers," said a refugee to one of the stewards.

An old woman from the south of France,

suffering from inflammation of the throat, could not believe that she would not be allowed to pay for the oranges given her. "Come, now, you don't mean to tell me that you do all this for nothing." And how they were rejoiced by distributions of sweets and pastilles! "Oh, madame, I can't say what it is to have something nice in one's mouth! What a difference it makes to us!"

An old Alsatian woman, who spoke very broken French and had been given a tricolour by a steward, asked him: "Am I to keep this as a souvenir?" When he assured her that this was so, she began to cry, and, losing her head a little in her emotion, she dried her eyes with the flag!

A woman sat unmoved in a corner, nursing her child. She had followed the procession mechanically, and was so exhausted that she no longer even noticed that her baby was dirty, and that the rags in which it was swathed were damp. A committee-man took it gently from her arms, and, after reassuring her, took it away and handed it over to the ladies in the nursery. A Samaritan brought back the baby—a clean, rosy baby in new linen, a spotless flannel dress, a soft woollen sweater, socks, and white slippers. Its smiling, contented face, and the tender care given to dressing it made it like one of those pet children

whom one presents at dessert to its delighted family. The girl went from group to group asking, "Whose baby is this?" But there was no reply. Then an assistant took the child and, standing on a table, displayed him to the crowd of refugees, shouting in a voice which was heard above the hubbub of talk: "Whose baby is this?"

Presently a low, trembling voice answered, "Mine, sir." Its mother had recognized it only after a moment's hesitation, for she had not seen her little one look so bonny for many a week past. She took it and pressed it to her, unable to say a word for tears.

One of my friends took her needle and thread every morning to sew buttons on to the worn clothes. One day she put some buttons on the waistcoat of a respectable and very dignified old man. The seams of his cloak had given way, and were held together somehow with pins. She took it upon herself to sew them up again, while he watched her, quite astounded. No doubt, the woman's action reminded him of his destitution, recalled, perhaps, other faces that once bent over his clothes. An indescribable emotion seized him, and when she put her face close to his to speak to him—he was a little deaf—he suddenly imprinted a good smacking kiss on her cheek, and looked at her as if he had just done the most natural thing

in the world—one as natural as allowing her to mend his cloak.

Feeling all the distress expressed in the kiss, she could scarcely restrain her tears, and it seemed to her, as she looked at the pitiable crowd which thronged the thick atmosphere of the room, that all the sadness, all the gratitude, of these poor creatures escaped and came to her in that kiss.

An old man was entering Switzerland as a prisoner of war for the second time: he had been interned in 1870 with Bourbaki's army. So he asked to be allowed to visit the place of his first internment. They took him to the Church of the Fusterie. While passing over the Mont Blanc bridge, our guest of former days recognized Rousseau's Island, and remembered that he had been taken there for walks. He gazed for a long time at the church, went round it, and kept on comparing it with his old recollections of it. He remembered that it had partitions, and said that he was greatly interested to see it again. Then he was silent for a moment, thinking, perhaps, of the years that had elapsed between the two journeys. Though not astonished to see the same happenings repeated at long intervals, as in inexorable rhythm, he marvelled that fate had brought him back to this town. Suddenly he found his tongue, and could not express his thanks sufficiently.

There comes before my eyes again an octogenarian couple, an old man and an old woman, bent and shrivelled, both of them. They walked with difficulty, holding each other's arms, at the rear of the procession. The frightened glances which they cast round them, and their look of being more out of their element than the rest, told plainly enough that this was their first journey—and what a journey! Their clothes were in rags. When the procession reached its destination and the roll had been called over, and we wished to take the pair to the clothing departments for men and women respectively, they protested with one voice: "Oh! please don't separate us!" She, especially, was most unwilling, and besought the commissioner: "Good sir, you mustn't separate us; we are so old. Then, you know, what with this wicked war, who can say that we have much longer to live? Also, you must know that we have been married fifty years to-day." At the word they looked at one another and smiled, despite their distress.

Their golden wedding! Half a century of love, of life together, of sorrows shared—even this last sorrow—the loss of their home and exile. . . . And to-day was their anniversary!

However, the old man, who was the more worldly-wise of the two, reassured his wife and half persuaded her. She allowed herself to be taken

to the clothing depot. But we could see by her reluctance that her doubts remained. Had not their chief care during these long terrible weeks been to keep together?

The old man was the first to regain the large hall. In his black frockcoat, with a flower in the buttonhole, he was hardly recognizable. He had combed his grey locks and washed his hands, and had assumed the respectable look and behaviour proper to a man who celebrates his fiftieth wedding-day. He stood close to the door, waiting for his wife; but when she came in he did not recognise her any more than she recognized him. Almost new clothes—a jacket and skirt—had changed her. She had the clear face of a well-preserved old woman. She approached him timidly, a little awkwardly, her anxious eyes filled with tears. She saw her husband, but still was looking for him.

They come face to face. Their eyes meet. They discover one another. And in a moment they are in one another's arms, weeping together, but this time joy is mingled with their tears.

* * * * *

The refugees were given their meal during the hour's wait—often at the public kitchens, when the times of arrival made this convenient. They took their seats at long tables decorated with flowers, and smiled once more when they saw

the bouquets which were given to the women on leaving. We never ran short of flowers. Owners of gardens sent them in; everyone who had a border robbed it; and the florists and poor market flower-sellers brought their contributions.

The stewards and ladies helped wait at table, forming a chain and passing the plates along. These kind waiters included gendarmes and eminent professors. Kindly stewards might be seen engaged in persuading frightened or tired children to eat their neglected food.

Everyone who witnessed all this misery was so eager to help and so deeply touched that differences of education and circumstances were wiped away in a wonderful manner. In the presence of the victims all had the same thought the same impulse—not one of the smallest boons conferred on us by these poor travellers.

After the meal they were led back to the school. The police, stewards, and ladies took charge of the children, who were carried, if it rained, so that they might not get their feet wet. And up went all the umbrellas—a rare collection of umbrellas which had been sent to the station anonymously for the benefit of the refugees.

One evening in particular comes back to me. A group of grave sad-faced men at the end of one of the tables were most polite in their thanks whenever anyone handed them a plate. All

wore shabby and dirty clothes, but two or three of them had unusually refined features and seemed to be men of education. After dessert coffee was served and then came the signal for departure. The mothers collected their children and stowed away bottles of warm milk in their handbags, while children's toys and old men's sticks were recovered. Suddenly, amid all this hubbub, silence fell—no one knew how—and one of the men at the top of the table was seen to rise. For a moment he stood there, bolt upright, motionless, dumb, with his eyes closed. I recollect that he had a long grey beard, and that in the strong light his face wore a kind of solemn beauty that I had not noticed just before. Suddenly he began to speak in a somewhat hesitating and broken voice, which grew stronger as he proceeded. He addressed all the silent men and women around him:

"My friends, we must not leave Switzerland without giving her our blessing and our thanks. All my life through I shall remember this evening's meal, served by kindly hands. It is months and months since anyone treated us like this. Over yonder we were, it is true, given food; but in what a manner! Here they have waited upon us lovingly. We shall never forget it. I thank you." And the others repeated after him: "Thank you, thank you."

All the refugees surrounded us, and there were

hand-clasps charged with feeling—the hearty grips by which those who cannot speak impart the superabundance of their emotions. And we thought that it was our country to which they gave their thanks in this fashion.

In the morning we escorted them to the tramway, where a dense crowd was always waiting on the pavement to watch them depart. When all had taken their places, the little children had been handed to their mothers, and the oldest and most infirm people had been made as comfortable as might be on the seats, the four-coach tram rolled off, and everyone stood at the windows to wave us a last good-bye. As we replied to these friendly signals we experienced a curious feeling of loss. We shall never see those faces again; they will be scattered far and wide to the four corners of France. The convoy, a single living thing, as it were, with a thousand sorrows, will exist no longer. Just for one day it has been granted us to share the life of these men and women, to enter into their grief and their difficulties. These are no commonplace meetings. At such times all superficiality and convention is swept aside; hearts meet and open and read one another, disclosing themselves without words and becoming linked together by all that is deepest and saddest and most real in them. One

becomes attached to these friends of an hour who have unbosomed themselves so unreservedly. Their faces will return and visit us. And we shall ask ourselves, " Where are they ? Are they at last able to forget things a little ? Have they at last found peace ?"

There were convoys even more pitiable than those already described—convoys of incurables who had been evacuated from their hospitals in a body. The strongest among them dragged themselves along with the help of their sticks. Others were driven in motor-cars. The helpless were on stretchers. Oh ! that long procession of stretchers right down the road ! There were poor distraught women who kept repeating meaningless words and actions, unceasingly vexed by the same distresses. In most cases this mental disorder was due to terror.

There were whole convoys of very young boys and old men, returning from concentration camps. They had been captured early in the war and separated from their families. Amid the confusion of the sudden parting they had had to leave filled with amazement and grief; that was all they knew about it. Among them were mayors and priests, seized as hostages. Their emaciated faces told what they had suffered. . . . They were covered with vermin.

" Don't come near me, ma'am, said a young boy considerately; " I am alive with lice." The

sorry-looking young people cheered up when cigarettes were handed round. They crowded about us. Everyone wanted to tell his story. They drew from their pockets knives cleverly made out of sharpened hoop-iron, and spoons shaped out of wood. We did not need their words to make us realize their sufferings; it was quite sufficient to look at their pinched faces.

These lads of fourteen or fifteen had been without news of their parents for months. The old men had been torn from their wives, who were still "over yonder." Discharged soldiers suddenly burst into tears when talking of their little ones. And how could one console them? Their country had been ravaged, their possessions destroyed—they could put up with all that. But to get no news. . . !

"I have seven children, and my wife was about to give birth to an eighth. And I hear nothing. . . ."

"I have five children . . . the youngest is two years old." Voices break; pale, bearded faces contract and turn away. These men's quiet tears are more moving than all the women's sobs.

"Ah! those who are all together don't suffer as we do!"

The parents of the soldier whose fate is hidden from them know the meaning of alternating fear and hope. To-morrow, perhaps, they will hear

from the son they have given to their country. If he has laid down his life, the dread sacrifice will be made less hard by the knowledge that he died in the performance of his duty. But to tremble for wife and little ones still in the ravaged country, and to be certain that every attempt to get at them is doomed before it begins—"Ah!"*

I remember the crushed bearing and difficult tears of an old man whose wife had remained behind.

"We had never parted," said he, "and now . . ." His voice broke, and he fell silent. But the restrained sorrow of that old, rugged-faced man!

A thin, yellow-faced hunchback tells me that he is done for and is going to Evian to die there. The conditions in camp had aggravated a liver trouble. He had fallen into consumption. His wife and daughter had stayed in the Meuse. He shows me a letter which his wife managed to get to him in Germany—well written, very tender, telling him to be sure and take care of himself—"You are the dearest thing we have." He looks at the sheet with a smile of distress and tears in his eyes. "I shall not see them again. I know I am done for; I know something about medicine." After a spell of silence he continues: "I

* A few weeks ago it became possible to send short letters into the invaded parts of France.

was happy enough, as happy as M. Poincaré himself, before the war. My wife is thirty-five. . . . We have a fine child who grows like a chestnut-tree. Yes! we were happy. I was always a family man."

Then, as if unable to escape the grief of his tragedy, he tells his story: "And we could have escaped. We had actually started off with the cattle. Then we thought, 'The Germans will not come,' and went back home. What a trifle things hang on!"

Most of the men were absolutely destitute, literally not owning a halfpenny, though they have German papers given them in exchange for a whole life's savings. There was one young man, I remember, who had a dignified carriage and a face that commanded respect—the Mayor of his village and formerly in easy circumstances. My friend was mending his clothes, and he said to her suddenly and somewhat shamefacedly: "Madam, since you are so kind, could you give me four sous . . . to buy some tobacco?"

On some occasions the women of a village are taken one way and the men in another; and the parties go into the unknown, these to the right, those to the left. A refugee who had been separated from her husband in this fashion sketched in a few words a picture of these departures:

" One day we were told that we were moving. The men and boys were collected in the square, all the women outside the village. Everybody was crying out and weeping. The men went off through the fields, we by the road. We never saw one another again, and nothing more has been heard of them."

Then the children who had to be taken along, the various indispensable things that had to be carried, the endless tramps along the road to the railway-station through all that despair . . . !

Some of the evacuated folk have not yet ended their travels. While their brothers in misfortune prepared to depart, the hospital car came for these. Samaritans transferred them in it to the infirmary, where they were tended after their arrival. And that was their last journey.

At the hospital care and love embraced them. The doctor and nurses who took them in at the Rue de Berne proved themselves friends till the end of their sojourn; and when their last hour came they did not feel themselves forsaken. If they have not been able to reach their native soil, they have at least been buried in a friendly land. They have well earned their rest.

From March, 1915, the work of repatriating the refugees was handed over to the military authorities. Territorial soldiers took the place of the gendarmes and civil police. It was they

who gave an arm to the old men, took charge of bundles, and carried the children. Nothing was so pretty as to see these fair-haired little things from the Ardennes and the North sleeping on the shoulder of a strapping, grizzled infantryman. These fathers of families, to check the tears of the weary, bewildered babies, made use again of the pet names by which once on a time they called their own little ones. The children were reassured, and smiled at them and stroked the moustachioed cheeks of the fatherly soldiers who knew just how to carry them.

After that the convoys of five hundred evacuated people arrived regularly twice a day at fixed hours. After roll-call in the Rue de Berne, they were fitted out, the poorest helped, and the sick attended to; they then continued their journey almost at once, the tram taking them to Annemasse. Many of us were deeply grieved that their large numbers made it impossible to comfort each one of these unfortunates properly. They were so many, and the time so short. We had to work at top speed, and to content ourselves with attending to the pressing needs of the sick and the children.

So the populace made itself responsible for completing the welcome which circumstances rendered too summary to satisfy our sympathetic hearts. From the moment our guests set foot

in Geneva the populace spread round them that atmosphere of sympathy and kindness which was so comforting, and made them stand erect and smile and shed the tears that ease sorrow.

We knew to a moment when they would arrive—there was no more unpunctuality—and every day, in the morning and afternoon, the crowd collected round the station, watching silently, with hands full of gifts. The whole population of Geneva was there—magistrates, workmen, professors, clergymen, clerks; all the dwellers in the poorer quarters of the city through which these sad processions passed every day, who were never weary of giving; many women, leading their children. The children brought boxes of chocolate, flowers, and toys; their parents, clothes, bags, valises, small change. Poor women carried bags crammed with provisions.

We waited patiently, while the soldiers walked up and down, pressing back the crowd to keep a passage clear. Everybody obeyed them. Motor-cars lent to the Samaritans by their owners came up one behind the other and formed a line along the platform.

The train had come in. The cars drove off almost immediately with the sick cases. From the station steps one saw the first of the refugees appear, surrounded by soldiers. They descended

slowly, and passed by. Others followed them. Then the dense crowd to right and left moved towards them as one man with hands outstretched. Nothing could be more beautiful than this pressing forward to meet the victims of misfortune. They now no longer saw a strange town, but only two living walls of faces turned to them, hands which gave to them. It was a sort of spontaneous vote of welcome, a wordless protest against the ills they were enduring, a unanimous opening of hearts. The refugees felt the love given them as they passed, and tears of thankfulness for deliverance replied to tears of pity.

The crowd surrounded the procession and escorted it to the school. Sometimes conversations were started. The poor things would stop a moment to express their thanks, a look of delighted surprise suddenly transfiguring their tired faces.

The soldiers, obedient to their orders, kept pressing back the crowd, but in kindly fashion permitted this touching intercourse and helped travellers whose hands were full. One felt that at heart they approved what the crowd was doing.

Passers-by on the pavement in front of the gateway watched the gates swing to; and when, two hours later, the refugees were brought out again to be taken to the train, they found the

crowd still there, as if keeping a precious appointment.

It was the same thing every day.

* * * * *

In January, 1916, the last regular convoys coming direct from invaded France passed through —the last up to the present.* They were made up of large, poor families, evacuated by order.

Here, too, was misery indescribable. Day after day, late in the afternoon, one saw the refugees descending the large stairway leading to the Rue de Lausanne. Crushed and sad were these groups that swayed towards us—bare-headed women, clusters of children clinging to their skirts, wrapped-up infants, old country-women in beehive bonnets with a thin shawl crosswise on their breasts, aged couples holding each other's arms, peasants in smocks or corduroy coats, with fine, rugged faces fringed with white hair. Their movements are slow and stiff, and one feels that these old bodies are crippled and crushed by an immense weariness. Many women are weeping, and the attendant crowd strives to comfort them as they go along. "Cheer up! Dry your tears! Cheer up!"

What a clattering this flock makes as they drag their clogs over the cobblestones! What meek-

* A few belated convoys went through in the spring.

ness—the docile carriage of frightened people! An old man who stepped off the pavement stepped back again hurriedly. Another, so bent that he seemed to be looking for something on the ground, tries to quicken his speed.

Snatches of conversations are exchanged between the refugees and the crowd.

"Yes! Everything has been destroyed down our way."

"Near Craonne. . . . Ah! the guns. . . . We took to our cellars."

"At our place eighty civilians were killed by shells."

"I was going into the fields to work under fire with my little girl when a bullet struck my sabot. One paid no attention to that sort of thing."

"A shell burst in our house. . . . The schoolmistress was indoors, and had a foot blown off. We never found the foot in the room."

Three children are travelling by themselves. Their mother had been shot. A woman has seven little ones with her, two of them adopted —"What else could one do? One couldn't leave them behind, eh?"

Think of the rainy days when the procession clattered along in the water; of the harassed women; of the children falling down in the mud and being picked up plastered from head to foot; of the coughings; of the childish voices; of the

impassive and dumb old folk; of the passers-by who burst into tears!

Some French refugees at Geneva and repatriated people scattered in Savoy used to come to the station in hopes of hearing, by some lucky chance, news of their folk who had stayed "yonder." Now and then one saw a woman suddenly leave the crowd and fall into the arms of a refugee: friends and relations were restored thus to one another.

During the whole of last spring a mother came to every convoy to look for her two children. One summer evening they passed through. They recognized her, just as the tram was starting for Annemasse, and flung themselves out of the car and fell in her arms with cries of "Mother!"

A charwoman in a blue apron asked permission to enter the school in the Rue de Berne. "My godson is in the convoy. I want to see him. He is fifty-four, is my godson. Now I shall have to find someone else to send my parcels to."

Old helpless bodies are taken from the motor-car—women who have to be carried. One sees groups swallowed up in the half-darkness, attendants carrying poor creatures of whom only the bent back and a wisp of grey hair is visible. One of them said: "It would have been better to die sooner. . . ."

Human wrecks whose only possession is now

a weakly body, and pains of all sorts now aggravated beyond remedy. The other invalids wait their turn in the car, not moving from the seat in which they were placed, saying nothing and showing no surprise.

I can still see one of these listless old men who suddenly seemed to have a flash of consciousness as the car moved off. He took off his hat and made shift to smile. The wind blew his grey locks about his pale face; and until the car disappeared at the end of the street we saw this face turned to us and brightened by a thought that had not been put in words.

I see, too, a grandmother carrying a two-year-old grandson and driving four other children before her—small boys of four to eight, whom one would never have taken for brothers, as they were almost of a height and clad in the queerest of clothes. She had a thin, weather-beaten, red face, framed in an old crape bonnet with strings tied round her wrinkled cheeks. As she rearranged the baby which she carried on her back, she said: "They are heavy."

She walked straight ahead, bending forward under her burden, looking neither to right nor left. At times she uttered a few words in a low voice, and one had to lean close to her to catch them.

"I have reared eleven of them. . . ."

"*They* have kept my daughter yonder."

She moved off into the unknown, with set face, deaf, apparently, to what was said, her eyes fixed on the distance—on the past, maybe—a solitary figure, with five grandchildren to provide for, who would have to begin again in her old age the work of her long life. Yet only these words of resignation escaped her—" They are heavy."

These were pictures of human distress which we shall never forget—haunted by the misery springing from this war. This generation of ours which has witnessed sights like these will feel its utmost efforts inadequate to repair the damage —to build things up again.

Nothing is more terrible than the agitation of these uprooted octogenarians, who in many cases are travelling without a single friend to look after them. They have been torn from their people, from the home in which their life passed quietly. Take, for example, the woman of eighty-eight whom we saw in a procession, whose only baggage and companion was a little dog which she carried wrapped up in linen. She showed it to us, with the words: " It cost me a lot of trouble to save her; I had to hide her for three months. Yes! I lived in a little house. It was taken from me." A woman by her side corroborated her: " She comes from our village. They took everything from her; but don't worry, I'm looking after her."

We then asked the old dame: "What have you got in the way of money? They will change it for you." "None; I've got none." Then, pointing to the little dog, "That's all that's left to me."

She was given a basket for her dog, and a collar was put on its neck. We were quite overcome by the childish joy and thankfulness shown by the poor old thing.

Another convoy contained a solitary old woman of eighty-five. She was a peasant, decently dressed in black skirt and bonnet; slim and exhausted looking, with a refined face that might have been shaped out of yellow wax. No doubt she could neither read nor write and had never left her village. She, too, said: "They took everything from me. I have nothing left."

She did not know what had become of her daughter, whom she had lost. She had been obliged to go one way and her daughter another. Will they ever meet again? Nor has she any news of her grandson, who has been fighting since the war broke out.

She says: "I have seen and suffered everything."

They offered her clothes. Would she like some linen, or a cloak, or some shoes? But she shook her head slowly, and said to the lady who asked her: "Why dost thou take so much trouble over

my poor body? It is finished." This Biblical use of the word "thou" had something touching about it, and brought tears to the eyes of my friend, who insisted gently: "Please tell me what we can do for you." The old woman answered: "Nothing. I have lost everything. Give me a kiss."

My friend will never forget the kiss and the warm hug of that mystical peasant woman, who suddenly exclaimed: "We shall meet again up above."

Then, in spite of her protests, she was given a new set of clothes. As each article was handed her she objected with gentle obstinacy: "It is a waste of good things. My body is done with, thou seest."

When the time came to rejoin the convoy as it went off, and we went to find the old woman and put her in the car, she repeated as she parted from those who had welcomed her: "But we shall meet again above."

Her look of happy certainty transfigured her. She who had "seen and suffered everything," for whom the things of this world were henceforth of no account, left behind her feelings of admiration. She was not merely resigned; the certainty that sorrow had brought her made her rich with riches that no human chance would ever be able to diminish.

Thus, day after day, week after week, month after month, the procession of victims passed through. Those who saw it go by will ever have this vision of despair fresh before their eyes. Never was seen such concentrated distress, such a waste of happiness and health and life. The convoys of poor human wreckage showed us continually the cruellest side of war, unillumined by the heroism of those who sacrifice themselves and go to their death singing, as the bugle sounds the charge and the colours wave, and military pomp and circumstance does something to hide the dreadful slaughter under a cloak of glory.

The heroism of these human flocks may be called resignation. They are crushed by restrictions, accustomed to annoyances, obedient to orders, dumb and sorrowful. They know well enough that their misfortunes do not aid their country. They have no share in the greatness which springs from willing self-sacrifice. It is not their privilege to raise their heads and smile at their glorious sufferings.

Yet—another kind of greatness comes from these sufferings, borne apparently in vain. They love more than ever the soil from which they were driven, the country for whose sake they lost their all. These French folk have only their French birth left to them, but that will henceforward take the place of everything.

Like the old woman who was able to weep again when she kissed the tricolour, they felt a quiver of joy in the presence of their flag which other French people will never know. They have passed through invasion, terror, bombardment, flames; they have seen their houses burnt to the ground, and their brothers slain. They will remember; they will be the first to utter, every moment of their lives, "Let us stand together. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder, let us quit ourselves. like men, so that there shall be no more war."

They never said these words: yet we heard them, and we took them to heart. They will remain after their speakers have passed away.

HISTORICAL NOTE

THE FIRST STEPS

WHEN war broke out, the belligerent countries generally informed enemy subjects that they must leave their territory without delay. All the people in question were deeply perturbed; and many of them, for one reason or other (the overcrowding of trains, the difficulty of obtaining permits, etc.) could not cross the frontiers, and so were interned.

The first class of civilians repatriated by Switzerland was made up of people like these. There were but few convoys of French civilians. Soon they were succeeded by a second class of interned people, inhabitants of the invaded provinces, who were sent to Germany and immured there, and, after a longer or shorter stay in concentration camps and fortresses, were sent back to France.

Then came the third class—evacuated people who were captured in their villages and sent back to France via Switzerland.

The above pages are concerned especially with repatriated folk of the last two classes.

* * * * *

At the beginning of the war the Swiss Confederation offered its services to France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, to help the repatriation of interned civilians* (at that time the question of dealing with evacuated persons had not arisen). On September 22, 1914, the Federal Council decided to institute a department for the repatriation of interned civilians, with headquarters at Berne. The same day it issued a regulation, the first article of which is as follows:

"FIRST ARTICLE.—A department for repatriating interned civilians has been formed under the direction of the Political Department. This department, with headquarters at Berne, is responsible for returning to their country of origin women, children, sick persons, the aged, and other civilians not fit to bear arms, who have been detained by order of an administrative or military authority of one of the States engaged in the present war." †

Negotiations with the belligerent States were difficult. The interned civilians included a number of men of military age, and a distinction had therefore to be made. An agreement was

* Ernest Röthlisberger, *Die schweizerische Hilfsaktion für die Opfer des Krieges und das Heimschaffungswerk*, Separatabdruck aus dem Politischen Jahrbuch der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, Berne, 1915.

† Feuille Fédérale, 1914, iv., p. 127. Professor Ernest Röthlisberger was appointed president of it.

first come to on the basis of returning to their respective countries all women and children, and afterwards men under eighteen and over fifty years of age.

The cost of transport, said the agreement, "will be borne by the respective States of origin of the persons repatriated. In return, public generosity will be expected to bear the cost of entertaining and housing the interned during their passage through Switzerland." This State appeal to individuals is quite in accordance with Swiss traditions, and it may be said that in Schaffhausen, as in Zurich, Geneva, Rorschach, and elsewhere, in every Swiss town, "public generosity" did not fail to do its duty.

The Scheme in Operation.

The first French interned entered Switzerland on October 22, 1914, and on November 2 the first Austro-Germans passed through. The work had begun.

On December 21, 1914, the Federal Political Department, acting on representations that had been made by the countries interested, announced that the repatriation of interned civilians in convoys must be considered at an end. The Supply Commissions were to cease working on December 24.

In spite of this announcement, transportation did not stop. On January 5, 1915, fresh convoys were passing through Switzerland. They were composed almost entirely of French exiles from departments occupied by the German armies. Between February 4 and 14, 1915, Schaffhausen alone received more than 4,000 of them. Things were being speeded up, as it was understood internationally that this extension of time would terminate on February 28. Every day a body of about 450 repatriated people left Schaffhausen for Geneva. By March 1, 20,475 persons detained in enemy country had crossed Switzerland in 186 convoys (the largest numbered 739) and returned to their respective countries.

However, at the beginning of March, 1915, the Berne Bureau and the forwarding committees were dissolved, and the Confederation put the transportation of evacuated people under military control. Handling the convoys was transferred to the Federal Territorial Service, and from March 6 onwards these unfortunates continued to pass through under the sympathetic care and friendly eye of the Landsturm* and of committees appointed for the purpose. Even to-day convoys still pass through.

General Organization.—It is evident that trans-

* The soldiers of the Landsturm are practically the counterpart of the French Territorial troops.

port of this kind required a very complicated and in some ways delicate organization—all the more so because the travellers to be conveyed had so often suffered indescribable misery, both moral and physical. Provision had to be made not only for railway facilities, but for food and lodging during the journey. Furthermore, the trains conveyed many sick persons, some of them actually dying, and it was needful to be prepared for all contingencies.

It was obvious, however, that everything could not be foreseen, and that as needs developed they had to be satisfied. For this reason round every departmental commission there developed subsidiary organizations which assisted the fugitives in many different ways.*

At Geneva, where many trains arrived in the evening, the executive of the Town Council offered large premises in several of the primary schools for the accommodation of the refugees. Every day a large number of volunteer stewards —ladies and gentlemen—representatives of re-

* Such as helping to find lost persons; establishing touch with relations and friends in Swiss towns; distributing post-cards and flowers; lending umbrellas, etc. Many of the kind stewards acted as correspondents for poor illiterate folk, and kept the restaurant tables decorated with vases and bouquets of flowers, etc. We know that these small cares and attentions were greatly appreciated by those on whom they were conferred.

cognized bodies, Samaritans, rescue workers, police, employés of the Federal railways and of the public buildings wherein the evacuated and interned people were lodged, restaurant staffs (especially those of the public kitchens), manned the breach, and it will generally be acknowledged that they played their part nobly.

The convoys might arrive in the small hours of the morning, but a sufficient staff was always there to receive them. And sometimes the weather was bad enough! In other towns, though the nature of the working "commissions" varied in details, there was the same universal good-will and, speaking generally, the same organization.

Forwarding Committees.—The Political Department appointed Federal Commissioners from each town at the termini of the railways traversed by the convoys. Their duties were to direct the reception, feeding, and forwarding of evacuated and interned civilians.

As soon as the convoys were put under military control, the sectional committees were dissolved, and the various committees thenceforward worked in harmony with the military authorities. Zurich, which previously had played but a minor part, now became a chief centre. Its Committee widened its scope considerably, and its president*

* Pastor Cuendet.

had a very complete organization ready for work.*

The forwarding commissioners and committee presidents were backed up by unlimited devotion. We must refrain from mentioning names—we should have to give them all—as anonymity is the rule in work of this sort.

Transport.—French interned and evacuated civilians entered Switzerland at Schaffhausen, and left our country at Geneva, whence the tramways took them to Annemasse, the town nearest to our frontier.

Interned German and Austro-Hungarian civilians arrived at Geneva, and from there were sent—the first to Singen in the Grand Duchy of Baden, via Winterthur; the last to Bregenz (Vorarlberg) via Rorschach.

Supply Services.—Supplying these many passengers (they numbered up to 1,350 in a single day) was evidently the heaviest task that had to be faced. All the travellers had to be fed; also medically cared for, cleaned, washed, and, in almost every case, clothed. Many of them had been seized in the street and carried off without a chance of going home and getting a few clothes or some underlinen. In the winter we saw

* *Documents sur la guerre Européenne. Le passage des rapatriés à Zurich.* Bâle, 1915. An album of 56 pages.

women arrive who had been captured during the summer, and still wore summer clothes. They had to be provided with everything. Great clothing depots were established at each halting-place, and in this connection "public generosity" —to use the words of the Federal Council—perhaps showed the greatest activity. Huge quantities of clothing, shoes, and hats for men, women, and children were accumulated at all the centres. At Schaffhausen, a town right on the frontier in German Switzerland, the evacuated had so cordial a reception that the least that can be said of it is that it was simply brotherly. In a single day *six hundred* packages were handed in.* These figures give some idea of what was done in each of the stopping-places; and it must be noted that this number includes only parcels sent to the commissioners. The evacuated received many additional presents in the street as they went along. At a later date, when the service had been militarized, France forwarded many clothes to the stopping-places.

As for feeding, this was provided at each town

* The town of Schaffhausen has only about 15,000 inhabitants, of whom 4,000 are foreigners—Germans for the most part. At Geneva parcels from all parts of the canton were delivered in great numbers. Their total cannot be given, as their contents flowed forth daily, like a stream.

according to its capacity. At Geneva it was managed chiefly by the model establisment of the public kitchens and at a temperance restaurant in Montbrillant.*

At Schaffhausen, where there is no great system of public kitchens, the evacuated were distributed in detachments among various restaurants and hotels in the town. At Zurich, refreshments were provided in the station itself. At Geneva sleeping accommodation was provided by army mattresses loaned by the State and placed in school premises—one of the most favoured having bedsteads; while at Schaffhausen the Federal Commissioners had made arrangements with several hotels, and the evacuated, when they arrived from Germany, found the comforts of a good bath and a good bed awaiting them.

It was in some cases very difficult to provide accommodation and supplies. It often happened that trains came in behind time, or that they contained many more passengers than were expected, and means must be found of catering for all. Sometimes, again, the trains came one on the heels of the other, and were not signalled till the very last moment; so that to be ready

* For supply services at Geneva, see *Le passage des internés civils à Geneve*, by Lucie Achard. Extract from the 49th Report of the Central Committee of the Charitable Board, Geneva, 1915.

for anything that might happen the commissioners had to be permanently on duty from the early hours of the morning till the last thing at night.

Here is a single example, taken from the official report of the Schaffhausen Committee, of the difficulties encountered:

On January 23, 1915, two trains, containing 578 and 739 internees respectively, entered the station almost at the same moment. At 9 p.m. on the previous day we had been warned to expect them. The quarters assigned to the travellers had to be kept warm all night, and a sufficiency of food, besides milk for the children, to be provided. The many articles of baggage had to be forwarded each to its proper destination.*

At 10.55 the first train started for Geneva. The second division remained at Schaffhausen all day. The people were a particularly miserable-looking lot, and the Schaffhausen folk came in thousands to help the poor unfortunates as they passed along, or in their hotels. The newspaper report ends on this sober note: "It was one of the hardest days we had had, and we can say with satisfaction that everyone did his duty conscientiously and devotedly."

* A single train carried upwards of 16,000 pounds of baggage in large articles. The cost of supplies and baggage handling on that day rose to 3,789·05 francs.

In the street commissioners of both sexes were engaged in carrying children and parcels—though sometimes the owners would not on any account part with them at the station*—and the populace generally often lent a helping hand. In the restaurant they assisted the regular staff, which was naturally overwhelmed, and one saw "chains" of servants, containing representatives of all classes—workmen, professors, police, and magistrates, brought closer together by kindly action than by any amount of patriotic talk—handing bowls of soup, plates of meat, dessert, and cups of coffee along the line.

At every stopping-place throughout the journey the repatriated travellers received clothes, dainties, toys for the children, and so on.

Money-Changing.—At the termini—Schaffhausen and Geneva—any travellers who so wished could exchange foreign money in their possession at the most favourable rates.

Postal Arrangements.—The commissioners distributed post-cards, in most cases franked—at Schaffhausen, at the beginning, all were franked. At Geneva a kind of post office was established in the premises allotted for the accommodation of the evacuated, and a considerable number

* The baggage was in some cases of a most extraordinary kind, and such as could only be explained by the suffering like their possessors.

of letters and telegrams were handled in them.

Correspondence.—The repatriation offices of the divisional commissioners received letters addressed to the refugees. At Geneva the names of addressees were written up on notice-boards to attract the attention of people as they arrived. The letters were arranged in alphabetical order, and so could be delivered to people as they went past.

The Berne Repatriation Bureau received and forwarded, thanks to the assistance of voluntary helpers, more than 52,878 postal parcels up to the beginning of March, when the convoys passed under military control.

Search for the Missing.—During their passage through Switzerland the travellers are informed of the Geneva Prisoners' Agency (International Red Cross) established to search for the missing. Also, the Geneva Bureau publishes lists of all the repatriated who have crossed Switzerland, giving their surnames, Christian names, age, and place of domicile in France.* These lists, drawn up till February 29, 1916, were sent by the Geneva Bureau to all the prisoners' camps in

* See the *Lists of Interned* [*or evacuated*] *French Civilians* drawn up under the care of M. Audéoud. Paris, Lyons, and Geneva. There are already eight of them and one supplement.

Germany, and interned Frenchmen in the camps were thus enabled to consult them and find out what persons of their locality had been repatriated.

Medical Attendance.—At all the halting-places people appointed to give the evacuated travellers medical attention were always in attendance—representatives of the Red Cross, Samaritans, male and female nurses, and so on. Doctors presided, and volunteer stretcher-bearers and motor-cars, kindly lent by their owners, were available for medical work and transported the worst cases.

At Schaffhausen a receiving infirmary of four wards, with beds, was established in the station; at Zurich the doctors visited patients in the carriages themselves; and at Geneva a completely equipped infirmary was directed by a doctor. It occupied the school buildings in Berne Street, and was of considerable service.

All the convoys included a number of sick. The serious cases were sent to the hospitals. From one detachment forty-five sick were despatched either to the infirmary or the hospital at Schaffhausen. But the medical service was most patronized at Geneva. It was supported by the Samaritan Society. Between October, 1914, and January, 1916, the doctor attached to the infirmary had to treat 8,951 cases, which

represent 8·23 per cent. of the 108,564 persons repatriated from the various belligerent countries.* Fifty-nine cases were taken to the Geneva hospitals.

Deaths.—Some deaths have unfortunately to be recorded: those of travellers who suddenly fell ill on the journey, of invalids who had been insufficiently cared for during their captivity and moving from place to place, and of exhausted old folk, etc. At Schaffhausen two died; at Zurich one young girl, aged twenty-two. On each occasion the body was followed to the cemetery by commissioners and inhabitants. Stones were set up on the graves of these poor victims. At Geneva sixteen deaths had to be registered.†

Statistics.—The many kinds of equipment needed at stopping-places necessarily involved considerable expense, which was defrayed by gifts. It is not possible to give exact figures of the expenditure up to the time of militarization, nor of the

* Dr. Jean Késer, *The Infirmary for Interned and Evacuated Civilians in the Rue de Berne, Geneva:* a pamphlet. Geneva, 1916. The following are some particulars of the cases treated: Digestive system, 1,935; circulatory system and blood disorders, 1,203; respiratory system, 1,198; bruises, wounds, abscesses, ulcers, 1,113; skin disorders, 948; nervous system, 857; eye troubles, 416; etc. These statistics have been kept up-to-date.

† Up to January 31, 1916.

sums paid out. Many of the last were made individually by members of the Committee, and did not appear in the common funds. However, some figures can be given. At Zurich the Committee collected, up to the end of December, 1915, the sum of 75,000 francs. It is equally impossible to learn the exact value of gifts in kind.* Basing our calculations on information given by the Committees at Zurich and Geneva (the first, be it noted, only began to act in March, 1915), we may say without fear of exaggeration that the clothing distributed at the various stopping-places represents alone a market value of about 800,000 to 1,000,000 francs.

Betwee n October 24, 1914, and March 31, 1916, 523 con voys passed through Switzerland, and of these 148 were Austro-German. The 375 French convoys transported 97,753 persons, of whom 19,940 were men, 45,834 women, 10,584 children less than four years old, and 21,895 children from four to thirteen years of age.

* We refer only to gifts of clothing; others cannot possibly have a value set on them. In all towns through which the convoys passed, associations of kindly people collected many gifts for the repatriated. The same applies to other towns not traversed by the convoys. We must remember that when repatriation was entrusted to the Territorial organization (*i.e.*, in March, 1915) the French Government contributed largely to the re-equipment of the refugees.

The 148 Austro-German convoys transported 1,678 men, 9,557 women, 906 children less than four years old, and 1,545 children from four to thirteen years of age—13,686 persons in all.

In addition to the repatriated, we can affirm that Switzerland has restored to their respective countries, without distinction of nationality, some 111,439 persons.

These statistics end with March 31. Since then a few convoys have gone through, and at the time of writing we are notified of others.

EUGÈNE PITTARD.

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